



MINISTRY OF HEALTH.

# REPORT

*of the*

Departmental Committee

*on*

The Relief of the Casual Poor.

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*Presented by the Minister of Health to  
Parliament by Command of His Majesty,  
July, 1930.*

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# DEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE ON THE RELIEF OF THE CASUAL POOR.

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## MINUTE OF APPOINTMENT.

I hereby appoint:—

J. A. Dale, Esq., C.B.E.

The Right Hon. Douglas Hacking, O.B.E., M.P.

Sir Arthur Lowry, C.B.

A. C. Parsons, Esq., M.R.C.S.

A. Paterson, Esq., M.C.

The Rev. L. R. Phelps, M.A., D.C.L.

Arthur Shepherd, Esq., M.P.

Mrs. Wintringham, J.P.

to be a Departmental Committee to inquire into the administration of the laws relating to the relief of the casual poor, and to make recommendations with special regard to the assistance of persons seeking work, and to persons suffering from physical or mental disability.

I further appoint the Rev. L. R. Phelps to be Chairman, and Mr. L. N. Ure, of the Ministry of Health, to be Secretary, of the Committee.

ARTHUR GREENWOOD,

25th September, 1929.

*Note.*—The estimated cost of the preparation of this Report (including the expenses of the Committee) is £340 10s. 5d., of which £65 15s. 0d. represents the estimated cost of the printing and publishing of this Report.

## LETTER FROM CHAIRMAN.

To the Right Honourable ARTHUR GREENWOOD, M.P.,  
Minister of Health.

SIR,

We have the honour to submit to you the Report for which you asked in your minute of the 25th September, 1929.

The terms of our reference are definite and clear, but we have not always found it easy to keep within them. The vagrant is a figure in national life all through English history. "Remote, unfriended, melancholy, slow" he goes on his way, a picturesque and pathetic figure. True, he has been at one time treated by authority with brutal severity, at another with tolerant complaisance, but he has survived. It would be idle to ignore this continuity. We recognise the value of the teaching of experience. But every generation has its own form of an old problem. New conditions are constantly arising, standards of living vary from century to century, the accepted judgment of one age is as a "creed outworn" to the next. If then we have now and again strayed beyond the bounds set us, it is because we felt that our proposals could only be fully understood when seen in the light of what had gone before. But whilst we note the success and failure of effort in the past to deal with vagrancy we have never forgotten that we were dealing with a particular feature of English society at a particular time. We have given a picture of the existing state of things as seen by ourselves, or based on the statement of witnesses. We have found much to deplore in the spirit as in the details of administration to-day. We make many recommendations for its improvement, often suggested by the example of humane and wise Boards of Guardians and their Officers. On the other hand, we have not found that there was much to be learned, for our purpose, from the practice of foreign countries which differ so widely from our own in conditions and character.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

L. R. PHELPS,

18th June, 1930.



# REPORT.

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## I. HISTORICAL.

1. The subject of vagrancy was exhaustively considered by a departmental committee appointed in July, 1904, by the President of the Local Government Board. The first chapter of the report of that committee, published in 1906 (Cd. 2852), contains an admirable summary of the history of vagrancy in this country and is reprinted in Appendix I of this report. It is therefore only necessary for us to trace the course of events since 1906.

2. The main recommendation of the 1904 committee was that the casual ward system should be continued but should be transferred to the control of the police authorities and supplemented by labour colonies established for the compulsory detention of persons found by courts of law to be habitual vagrants.

3. In addition, the committee emphasised strongly the need for a uniform system of administration and recommended provision of special assistance (by the police) to wayfarers in search of work, discontinuance of the practice of imposing short sentences of imprisonment for vagrancy offences, annual licensing and stricter supervision of lodging-houses by local authorities, control by local authorities of the provision by voluntary bodies of free food and shelter to the destitute, increased powers to prevent sleeping out, reception of women casuals in poor law institutions instead of in casual wards, and increased legal powers to secure removal of the children of habitual vagrants to industrial schools.

4. This report was accepted, almost without comment, by the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws and Relief of Distress which was appointed in 1905 and reported in 1909. The minority of the Commission, who presented a separate report, accepted the view that some form of compulsory detention was necessary for vagrants (among others) who persistently failed to obtain work for themselves or refused to avail themselves of any system which might be provided for training them to become efficient workmen.

5. The committee appointed by the Minister of Reconstruction during the War, under the chairmanship of Sir Donald Maclean, to consider and report on the Transfer of Functions of Poor Law Authorities in England and Wales (Cmd. 8917) gave some consideration to the vagrancy problem and suggested that provision should be made for training persons for whom employment exchanges

were unable to find work, and further that statutory powers should be given for detention, under Magistrates' orders, of able-bodied vagrants in case of wilful persistent refusal to obtain employment or to undergo training. The committee, without expressing a decided opinion on the point, were inclined to think that if municipal common lodging-houses were established in all large centres of population the problem of vagrancy might be solved by the adoption of their general proposals for the reform of the poor law under which any destitute wayfarer unable to pay for his lodging could be referred to the home assistance committee of the council of the county or county borough, to which the functions of the then existing poor law authorities were, under the committee's proposals, to be transferred.

6. Legislation would have been required to give effect to the principal recommendations of the 1904 committee that the administration of the relief of the casual poor should be handed over to the police, and that colonies for the compulsory detention of able-bodied habitual vagrants should be established. The proposals were, however, not brought before Parliament in the form of a Bill, and the Local Government Board, the central department then responsible for the administration of the law as it stood, had the responsibility of giving effect to such of the other recommendations of the Committee as did not require legislation.

7. Of these recommendations the most important was the introduction of an improved and uniform standard in the casual wards throughout England and Wales and the evidence given to us concerning the efforts made to secure this end is summarised in the following paragraphs.

8. In 1911, orders were issued constituting the Metropolitan Asylums Board the sole authority in London for the relief of casuals, and transferring to the Board the casual wards which were separable from workhouses and were required for the purpose of the Board's new work. The Metropolitan Asylums Board proceeded to establish a uniform system, and by March, 1914, it was found possible to reduce the number of wards in London from 28 to 12.

9. A further step was taken in 1913 when, with a view to developing co-operation between neighbouring poor law authorities outside London, an order was issued by the Local Government Board authorising boards of guardians to appoint, or make arrangements with, vagrancy committees constituted for the purpose of better administration of relief to the casual poor in any area.

10. During the War the number of casuals fell to a very low ebb and it was unnecessary to keep open a casual ward in the area of every union, but it was manifestly unfair that any union, by closing its ward should escape all charge for maintaining the casuals who might otherwise have entered the ward. In these



circumstances the Local Government Board encouraged the existing vagrancy committees to adopt a pooling system by which the whole area of the committees would bear the cost of relief of casuals and at the same time superfluous wards could be closed without causing financial injustices.

11. In 1924 the position of certain vagrancy committees jointly appointed by several boards of guardians was further strengthened by the issue of orders giving them definite constitutions and powers. At that time the central authority had no power to require individual boards of guardians to join such committees, but immediately before the 1st April, 1930, there were in all 32 vagrancy committees in England and Wales, representing the majority of boards of guardians in 45 counties, and of this number seventeen were constituted by orders.

12. Despite these various measures the condition of many casual wards throughout the country after the War was most unsatisfactory. The increase in the number of persons applying for relief in casual wards, which coincided with the period of post-war industrial depression, subjected the accommodation for casuals in certain areas to considerable strain. The strain was felt the more acutely because of the reduction of the accommodation set apart for casuals during the War, and the difficulty during that period of effecting improvements and even necessary repairs. In the circumstances the Minister of Health directed that a survey of the structure, equipment and capacity of the casual wards outside London and of the prevailing methods of administration should be undertaken by the general inspectors of the Department. The information obtained was summarised, tabulated and published in 1924 (Cmd. 2267).

13. After considering the survey, the Minister of Health issued, in March, 1925, the Casual Poor Relief Order\* (S.R. and O. 1925, No. 291) which consolidated and in some respects amended the regulations previously in force. The Order was distributed to all poor law authorities with a covering circular (number 576) in which attention was drawn to the survey and the view expressed that, whilst the visits of the general inspectors and the publication of the survey had in themselves led in many cases to improvements in the unsatisfactory conditions reported, there were still many defects which remained to be remedied. Poor law authorities were therefore requested to take into their direct and immediate consideration the nature of the provision made by them for the

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\* In consequence of the passing of the Local Government Act, 1929, it has been found necessary to issue a new order consolidating the poor law orders previously in force, and the regulations of the Casual Poor Relief Order, 1925, are reproduced with minor amendments in Part VIII of the Public Assistance Order, 1930, (S.R. and O. 1930, No. 185).

relief of casuals and the improvements which might be required. The circular continued as follows:—

“So long as there is a need for the provision of sleeping and other accommodation for ‘destitute wayfarers and wanderers,’ it is essential that the accommodation provided for them should reach a reasonable and proper standard. It should not be the case that the casual should in any Union fail to be provided with a decent and proper provision for sleeping, for the drying and disinfection of his clothes, and for his personal cleanliness.

“From the point of view of public health, the existence of a number of destitute wayfarers involves serious dangers of the spread of infection. This is of course especially marked in the case of smallpox and other dangerous diseases, but even apart from these serious diseases there are minor infections, such as scabies, which may be spread through their agency. It is essential that proper provision for bathing, with an adequate supply of hot water, should be made in every casual ward. Every casual should be carefully examined by the officer supervising the bathing with a view to discovering the presence of any skin eruption or other evidence of infection, and all casuals found to be so suffering should be reported at once to the Medical Officer for early examination and treatment. The Minister regards it as very desirable that the Medical Officer should periodically inspect the casual wards, and should do so, if practicable, at a time when he can also see the casuals, so that he may satisfy himself that they are free from disease.

“While the provision which has to be made for the needs of any class must be, as has been said, decent and adequate, the life of a confirmed casual, as distinguished from that of an unemployed workman who uses the casual wards to aid him in his search for work, is not one which the community can, with safety to itself, encourage. It is therefore necessary that the statutory enactments and regulations relating to the detention, dietary and tasking of casuals should be strictly observed in every Union. The Minister thinks it necessary that any rules made by the Guardians for the relaxation of the statutory period of detention should be approved by him.

“Every opportunity should be afforded to a casual to alter his mode of life, especially if he is an elderly man, by entering the Institution. Similarly, it is important that children should not be allowed to grow up to a life of vagrancy, and the Guardians should use every means in their power to ensure that this shall not be the case with children entering their own casual wards, especially when a child is in the care of persons other than its own parents. Action in either of these directions involves the assumption by the particular Union concerned of a charge which does not primarily belong to that Union.

The simplest way in which the expenditure of the Union, and the need for removing the casual from the road can be reconciled is through the adoption of one of the schemes of equalising expenditure which have already been made by a number of vagrancy committees. Under these schemes the committee area and not the single Union bears the charge of the maintenance of the person who ceases to be a vagrant. For this reason, and also as a means to secure uniformity of treatment for the casuats over wider areas, the Minister, as his predecessors have done, welcomes the formation of vagrancy committees on which each Union in the committee area is represented. The Minister may take this opportunity of stating that he would be prepared to consider recommendations of any committee for closing or keeping closed casual wards belonging to a Union represented on the Committee if the wards are shown to be superfluous.

"The Minister regrets to observe that the operations of several of the existing Committees are restricted by the fact that particular Boards of Guardians, though their Unions are within the boundaries of the area for which the Committee act, decline to co-operate with the other Boards of Guardians represented upon the Committee.

"As is stated in the Survey, the numbers of women casuats are much fewer than those of men and the provision made for their comfort is not, speaking generally, open to the same criticisms as might, in some cases, be levied against that made for the men. The Minister would see no objection to a practice of allowing women casuats to occupy suitable accommodation in the Institution itself, in any case in which accommodation intended for them might be used to improve the arrangements for male casuats."

14. Under the provisions of the Local Government Act, 1929, the functions of boards of guardians and other poor law authorities passed on the 1st April, 1930, to the councils of the counties and county boroughs of England and Wales. Section 3 of this Act gave the Minister of Health power to make orders combining the areas of two or more councils for any purpose connected with the administration of their poor law functions, either on application by the councils concerned or by the Minister without application if it appeared to him, after local inquiry, that such a course would tend to diminish expense or would otherwise be of local or public advantage.

15. In the first memorandum issued by the Minister of Health to local authorities on the subject of bringing the Act of 1929 into operation, attention was drawn to the special need for combined action as regards the relief of casuats. We understand that further departmental action is being taken to secure that the vagrancy

committee areas which were already in existence should be maintained and, that in no case should the area for the administration of the relief of casuals be less than a whole geographical county, including any county borough situated therein. At the date of this report we are informed that 16 Joint Vagrancy Committees have been established by Orders under Section 3 of the Act of 1929, covering 36 administrative counties and 63 county boroughs.

## II. THE CASUAL WARD POPULATION.

16. A casual poor person is defined in the Poor Law Act, 1930, as any destitute wayfarer or wanderer applying for or receiving (poor) relief; it is the fact of his entering, or asking to enter, a casual ward which makes him a casual. The homeless poor who do not apply for relief may be described as "wayfarers," the persons who accept relief in casual wards as a regular and permanent means of existence as "vagrants."

17. Under our terms of reference we are required to consider the administration of the relief of casuals. We are not directly concerned with the wider question of the homeless poor who do not seek relief in casual wards, still less have we anything to do with wayfarers who, though they have no settled home, are not in any normal sense of the term destitute. To understand the casual problem it is however essential to keep in mind the existence of the larger host of wayfarers, wanderers and other homeless persons from which the inhabitants of casual wards are nightly recruited.

18. No trustworthy estimate can be given of the relation, if any, between the numbers of homeless poor and the number of persons relieved in casual wards at any date or at any period. The only firm figures available are taken from the returns made to the Minister of Health by all poor law authorities in England and Wales of the number of persons relieved as casuals on the Friday night of every week in the year, and these figures for the last three years, and for the years 1909-10 and 1913-14, two fairly representative pre-war years, and for the year 1918-19, are reproduced in graphic form in Appendix V.

19. The most striking fact shewn by this graph is the very low numbers of casuals relieved during 1918-1919, the last year of the war. It would not be safe to assume that the plentiful employment then available was in itself the sole cause of the reduced numbers. The Military Service Acts introduced a new element of compulsion into the social system, and any able-bodied man who could not show himself to be already engaged in work of national importance could not, even if he would, continue to be a vagrant.

20. The second fact of importance is perhaps that the line representing the figures for the year 1909-10 (not a period of serious industrial depression) is on the whole higher on the chart than those for the three years 1927-1930. The introduction since 1909-10 of various forms of national and compulsory insurance of the wage-earning classes against sickness and unemployment, and the special measures taken in the Ministry of Labour for industrial transference from derelict mining areas must have been important factors in keeping in their homes persons who otherwise would have set out in search of employment. Whilst as a general rule it must be true that long periods of industrial depression swell the number of casuals, no direct relation can be traced between the Ministry of Labour weekly statistics of persons unemployed and the corresponding numbers of casuals relieved. The unemployment figures running from 1,000,000 to 1,600,000 in a week are not easily comparable with the casual figures which seldom exceed 12,000 nightly. To bring them into one chart the latter figures were multiplied by 100, while the unemployment figures were divided into the three classes recognised in the Ministry of Labour, i.e., persons whose employment is casual in character, persons temporarily stopped and persons wholly unemployed. The results of such comparisons were wholly negative.

21. The next fact, in some ways the most interesting of all, shown on the graph of the number of casuals relieved week by week is that the total number is, year after year, almost at its lowest in December and rises steadily and rather rapidly through the following months to reach its peak in May. During June there is, regularly, a sudden and rapid drop in the figures, which reach in July a point as low as or lower than those for December; they rise again steeply during the latter part of July, remain high throughout August and early September, then drop suddenly in October, rise again in November and fall through December. There is no evidence, statistical or other, that any considerable number of persons pass the winter in ordinary poor law institutions and the summer in casual wards.

22. At no time during the last three years has the number of casuals relieved on any one night been very much less than 9,000. Seasonal employment may account for the fluctuations in the numbers relieved, but does not explain the existence of the whole body of casuals.

23. The Ministry of Health, in 1928, undertook an investigation into the matter, and the following extract is taken from the Annual Report of that Department (Cmd. 3185) on the subject:—

“Some light is thrown upon the constituent elements of the casual ward population by a census carried out in London and in certain provincial Unions on the night of the 10th February, 1928. The investigation covered 2,582 persons,

or nearly one-quarter of the total number relieved on that night, and its results may therefore be taken as fairly representing the position throughout England and Wales. The results correspond very closely with the results of the census carried out in 1905 for the Departmental Committee on Vagrancy, and, so far as they cover the same ground, with those of a return of the whole number of casuals relieved in a large provincial Union during the six months from October, 1927, to March, 1928.

"The results must, as in all such cases, be regarded with some caution since they depend either upon the uncorroborated statements of the casuals themselves or upon the personal bias of the officers making the return in the different institutions.

"22 per cent. of the men were described as being persons undoubtedly seeking work, and 28 per cent. as being undoubtedly habitual vagrants. Of the remainder 29 per cent. were described as temporarily unemployed persons possibly seeking work, and 21 per cent. as being probably habitual vagrants.

"In London the respective percentages were: undoubtedly seeking work 12½, undoubtedly habitual vagrants 33; probably seeking work 31½, and probably habitual vagrants 23. The difference in the figures may be due to the special circumstances of the Metropolis and the apparent existence of a class who, seldom or never leaving London, habitually resort to the London wards, or possibly to the wider experience of the superintendents of the London wards, who are in much closer relation to the vagrants under their charge than the masters of many of the provincial institutions can be.

"In the Union return already mentioned, detailed information is given as to the trades to which the casuals claimed to belong. It will be understood that their claims have not been verified in any way. A total number of 8,876 persons passed through the ward. Of these no less than 7,559 described themselves as labourers. The remaining 1,317 were distributed over no less than 74 occupations, there being 37 bootmakers, 25 bricklayers, 22 carpenters, 57 cooks, 65 clerks, 75 fitters, 59 firemen, 79 grooms, 78 porters, 150 painters, 77 stokers, 295 seamen and sailors, and 40 tailors. Nine declared themselves to have no occupation."

24. Witnesses before us have differed widely as to the proportion of casuals who are travelling in search of work, and have suggested percentages varying from five to sixty. The discrepancy may be due partly to differences in the witnesses' definition of a

work seeker. Most casuals and many vagrants will no doubt be ready to undertake an occasional spell of work, but their unsettled habits of life have deprived them of that gift of holding on to a permanent job which a Borstal boy described to one of our members as "stickability."

25. These statistics confirm the impressions given by several witnesses that there are now to be found in casual wards a certain proportion of working men who, for one reason or another, have not been provided for by the machinery available for the relief of unemployment, and are not of the type for whom the casual ward is or could be suitable.

26. When the Ministry of Health inquiry mentioned on pages 13 and 14 was made in 1928 the age distribution of the men was taken and the Department has now collected from the same casual wards the corresponding figures for the 14th February, 1930.

The returns are tabulated below:—

#### MEN.

Year.	Age Groups.					Total.
	16-21	21-30	30-40	40-60	Over 60	
1928 ... ..	76	376	512	1,129	379	2,472
1930 ... ..	57	290	491	1,112	374	2,324

#### WOMEN.

Year.	Age Groups.					Total.
	16-21	21-30	30-40	40-60	Over 60	
1928 ... ..	1	5	23	56	25	110
1930 ... ..	1	7	28	65	18	119

—					1928.	1930.
Infants under 3	...	...	...	...	2	3
Boys under 16	...	...	...	...	1	—
Girls under 16	...	...	...	...	1	2

27. In considering the present system we have especially to pay attention to the assistance it provides to casuals who are seeking work and to casuals suffering from physical or mental disability.

28. We have discussed above the constituent elements of the army of casuals, with special reference to the proportion of them that can be regarded as seeking work. In regard to casuals suffering from physical or mental disability we had practically no data. From the general evidence we received, it was apparent that not many casuals are suffering from physical disability, except such as arise from age, and that it was the usual practice at very many casual wards to suggest to any so suffering admission to the poor law institution or infirmary.

29. The estimates of the numbers of casuals suffering from mental disability varied even more widely than those relating to work seekers, and after receiving evidence from two members of the Board of Control we were glad to avail ourselves of the Board's offer to allow Dr. E. O. Lewis, one of their Inspectors, to undertake a special investigation on our behalf. Dr. Lewis is the author of the Report published by the Mental Deficiency Committee of 1929, in which he estimated the mean incidence of mental defect in England and Wales as 7.34 per thousand of the population.

30. Dr. Lewis visited a number of casual wards in different parts of the country and examined the casuals he found in them. His account of what he found appears to us so important that we have thought it right to attach the whole of it to our report as Appendix III. Dr. Lewis, it will be seen, came to the conclusion that of the 592 casuals he examined 93, or 15.7 per cent., were feeble minded, 32, or 5.4 per cent., were insane, and 34, or 5.7 per cent., were in a psychoneurotic condition.

31. We see no reason to doubt the accuracy of Dr. Lewis' results, and we think the sample of casual wards which he visited was fairly representative of the country as a whole, subject to some allowance for the fact that of the 50 women he examined no fewer than 22 were in a London ward.

32. It has to be remembered that a feeble minded person is not necessarily subject to be dealt with under the Mental Deficiency Acts. If he is, he cannot be placed under guardianship or sent to an Institution without a magistrate's order, which can only be made after the presentation of a petition accompanied by two medical certificates.



### III. THE AIMS OF THE EXISTING SYSTEM.

33. Where the present regulations are perfectly observed (we shall show later in our report that they frequently are not) if a wayfarer requires relief in a casual ward he obtains admission either through an order given by a relieving officer or directly on application at the casual ward. On admission a casual is searched and all articles found upon him are taken away; unless there is reason to believe that bathing would be injurious to his health, he is bathed with clean warm water and provided with a clean towel; his clothing is taken away and, if requisite, dried and disinfected and suitable night clothing is issued to him. For his supper he receives eight ounces of bread, one ounce of margarine or dripping, and a pint of tea, coffee, cocoa, broth, or gruel; he is provided with proper sleeping accommodation and means of communication with a responsible officer; he is not required to share with another casual accommodation designed for the use of one person only. In the morning he receives a breakfast similar to his previous night's supper, and, unless there are special circumstances which justify his leaving that morning, he performs a task of work; the master will excuse him from the whole or any part of the task if it appears that the task is not suited to his age, strength or capacity; for his mid-day meal he receives eight ounces of bread, half an ounce of margarine or dripping, two ounces of cheese, four ounces of potatoes, possibly with the addition of some other vegetables. When his task is completed he is given an evening meal as on the evening before, remains in the casual ward for that night and leaves the ward any time not later than nine o'clock on the following morning, and as early as half-past six if he represents to the master that he is desirous of seeking work. When he leaves, the articles taken away from him on admission are restored to him; he is given half a pound of bread and two ounces of cheese if he wishes, or a ticket entitling him to obtain this bread and cheese at a shop somewhere between the casual ward and his destination. If at any time during his stay in the wards he appears to require medical attention the master summons the medical officer and makes arrangements for his transfer to an appropriate institution, unless he can properly be treated in the casual ward. Sunday does not count as a day of detention, so if he is admitted on Friday he will not normally be allowed to leave until Monday morning, and if he is admitted on Saturday he will not be allowed to go until Tuesday; if he has been admitted to a casual ward of the same poor law authority on more than one occasion during any one month he is not entitled to leave until the morning of the fourth day after admission and may during such period be removed from the casual ward to the institution. If he is suffering from any infectious or contagious disease and is, in the opinion of the medical officer of the institution not in a proper state to leave the institution without danger to himself or others he is liable to be detained until the medical officer certifies

that he may leave. Similarly, if a casual is a lunatic, the steps prescribed by the Lunacy Acts can be taken without delay for his certification and removal to the appropriate institution. Except in the circumstances mentioned above, there is no authority to detain a casual against his wish beyond the hour at which he is entitled to take his discharge, but attempts can be and are made to persuade him, if he is elderly or infirm, to settle down in the poor law institution.

#### IV. CRITICISM OF EXISTING WARDS AND SYSTEM.

34. Some witnesses have advanced to us the view that the casual ward system, under which a person can wander through the length and breadth of the land, and obtain at the public expense food and shelter, on the sole ground of being a destitute wayfarer or wanderer, is itself the cause of the problem which we have been called upon to consider. These witnesses have urged that, under the existing social system, any person in search of work should be able to obtain from the local employment exchange all the information and help he needs without setting out on a tour of personal inquiry and that a destitute person can obtain from the poor law authority for the area in which he lives relief in the form best suited to his condition. In consequence the provision at the public expense of facilities for men to wander as strangers into districts in which the only easily ascertained fact about them is that they are unable to provide board and lodging for themselves cannot be in the interests either of the public at large or of individual wayfarers. We were inclined at first to the view that as the existing law contains provisions for the relief of the casual poor, and indeed places upon poor law officers the duty of relieving destitution wherever it may occur, our limited terms of reference precluded us from admitting this evidence, but as it was offered to us and urged with considerable force, we felt bound to take it into consideration and shall proceed to deal with it at a later stage of the report.

35. Other witnesses advanced the directly opposite view, viz., that the available accommodation for casuals is inadequate, not merely because there is not in every casual ward sufficient accommodation, but because there are not enough wards to enable a wayfarer to proceed in any direction which seems to him good without at times being called upon to undertake a walk so long that it takes away from him any chance of looking for work in the course of his journey. Not the abolition but the multiplication of casual wards is their solution of the problem.

36. The criticisms of the administration of the existing system which we have received are, as a rule, based on the widely varying

standards of administration in different casual wards. The orders of the central authority were meant to establish throughout the country a uniform standard of decent accommodation and compliance with a number of well-defined rules concerning bathing, searching, bedding and dietary.

37. The evidence we have received shows clearly that many wards fall short of these standards.

38. In the first place we find it our duty to record that in a certain number of casual wards the conditions now existing are infamous and intolerable. Some of the members of our Committee have visited wards where two men are locked in a small cell that was built for one person, and kept there in darkness for 12 or 13 hours.

39. They have seen at least one casual ward where there are no baths, no clothes for the night are supplied, and each man lies down on a wooden floor dirty and dusty in his own clothes for the night. In others, the sleeping accommodation consisted of a shed which would not on a decent farm be considered fit for an animal of any value. In some wards no heating was provided; in many others there were no day rooms, or, where there were day rooms, they lacked ventilation and were crowded almost to suffocation. In other wards again, there was no yard or exercise ground attached, and men detained throughout Sunday were never allowed to leave the little block of cells where they were incarcerated. On one occasion a casual ward was visited on a Sunday, and the solitary occupant was discovered in the confinement of a small room throughout the day and night. He had only been visited twice between early morning and late evening by the workhouse porter, who gave him his bread and cheese for dinner and his bread and margarine for tea.

40. These conditions have continued for a number of years; the overcrowding that results in the double occupation of a small cell is not a sudden or exceptional phenomenon, but the regular and expected feature every night for several years.

41. Defects such as these must have been known to the boards of guardians responsible for the maintenance of the wards, but they have refused to spend the money that was necessary to secure even the decencies of life.

42. Furthermore, while the worst conditions prevail only in a certain number of wards, we have received evidence to the effect that in a large number of wards the regulations of the local authorities are not honestly observed. There are many places where towels, blankets, and sheets are not clean—where the beds or hammocks are so uncomfortable or inadequate as to deprive a man of sound or continuous sleep.

43. Complaints against the food relate not merely to inadequacy but even more to monotony of the diet, the absence of vegetables, the practice prevailing at certain wards of issuing gruel as the only liquid, and the crude way in which meals are served with no forks, spoons or knives.

44. We were interested to find that in the main the complaints we received on the subject of tasks were not that the tasks imposed are excessive, but that they are frequently so trivial or so useless that the men feel that they are degraded in having to waste their time upon them. As one witness said—

“The work I saw in the casual wards was a farce. I was only in one casual ward where the work was well organised. We chopped firewood like the Church Army—that seemed to be entirely good—but as a rule it was loitering about waiting to get out. It was simply being bored stiff, waiting and waiting and waiting.”

45. Many witnesses, especially those with first-hand knowledge of poor law administration, emphasized the difficulty of compliance with the letter and the spirit of existing regulations in the small poor law institutions in which one or at most two male officers are employed. These officers, responsible for the management of an institution to which the casual ward is only an appendage, have their hands full throughout the day and have little energy left for attention to the casuals who are admitted in the evening. The tendency, therefore, in these small institutions is to allot the duty of attending to casuals to an inmate generally known as the “tramp major,” who exercises some of the functions, but has none of the responsibilities, of an officer. His ministrations are strongly objected to by the casuals themselves, and it is most unlikely that a man so selected will have the qualifications needful for this work. A Prison Governor who gave evidence to us mentioned the subservience to a promoted brother—the tramp major—and the attitude and manner of certain officers, as two of the main complaints which prisoners made against the casual ward system, but added his own view that the casuals’ objection to the tramp major was because he was one of themselves and not because he was harsh or dishonest. An habitual vagrant who was serving a sentence of imprisonment, was asked by the Governor to write his views on casual wards, and in his essay he dealt with the tramp major as follows:—

“There is a lacky knocking a bout what they call a tramp major, this man is off the road and he is a dirty Broot as a Rool he stops in for a month or two doing part of the Porters work for a Bit of tobacco.”

46. On the other hand, we have found that the arrangements in a good many poor law institutions, especially those belonging

to poor law authorities which have combined effectively in vagrancy committees and those in London, give very little cause for criticism so far at least as matters of accommodation, cleanliness and task are concerned. The management of the casual wards in London provides a good example of the working of the present system, and we have prepared in Appendix II a short note of these arrangements.

47. Whilst, therefore, the existing system appears to offer to a sufficiently large and well-organised unit of administration, adequate scope for the grant of appropriate relief, there are still many areas in which the system is not carried out in its fullness. To our minds the most serious defect in those areas has been the apathy of poor law authorities towards the strangers within the gates of their casual wards, and the unhelpful frame of mind of those of their officers who were entrusted with the care of these destitute wayfarers. As one witness said in reply to the question whether he had found the officers civil in their treatment of casuals:

"They appeared harsh to me in the main, but then probably the tramps who are always with them and with their own class would not view them as being so harsh. The main complaint, if it be a complaint, that I make against the officers is that they have entirely lost heart and faith and hope in these men, and therefore all interest. In other words, they know them as they are. Sometimes they are deceived into thinking them worse than they are, they are never deceived into thinking they are better than they are. They expect to see them come back in three months' time, and their expectation is generally fulfilled."

48. The attitude of the officers as a rule reflects the attitude of the poor law authority by whom they are employed. Several other witnesses informed us that in certain areas there has been great reluctance on the part of the local poor law authority to incur expenditure on premises, equipment and staff for the relief of a class of person "who do not belong to them," and can be dealt with more cheaply by merely being passed along on their aimless journeys with the minimum of attention and care. One of the General Inspectors of the Ministry of Health told us that in his experience it is easier to get a wireless installation in the workhouse paid for out of the Guardians' own pockets than to get baths or warmth in the casual wards paid for out of the rates.

49. That such a condition of things is avoidable is shown by the following extracts from oral evidence given to us:—

(i) "At this casual ward the door is open for the man to go in when he likes. When he goes in he is in a spotless room, a spotlessly clean ward well lit and before any questions are asked at all, or before he is as they say 'chivied and chased' in any way, he is given good tea and the food he is going to have before anything is done at all. There was an old man

there and, when we were discharged in the morning after our task, the youth who acted for the Master begged in the kindest possible tone for the old man to stay in the house as a permanent inmate. He called him 'Dad,' and he said, 'You will be getting knocked down by a motor car.' That is a place which I should like to say, in spite of the horrible pilgrimage of outcasts which the officials are accustomed to year in and year out, has still not lost its soul."

(ii) "I have got in touch with every decent employer or large employer of labour, foundries, cotton mills and collieries, and I have got in touch with each of the managers, and have been able to plant men all over the district and find them work. I have put up a notice to the effect that we will try to get work for men honestly seeking it and wanting it. No man leaves my ward without having an opportunity of getting work, and he takes a letter from me to the particular employer. I feel from the letters that I have received and from the men who have come back to my ward and thanked me for the help given them it has been worth doing."

We have also received evidence that in some casual wards assistance is given to wayfarers over and above that prescribed in the regulations. For instance, we have been informed that certain masters have been authorised to provide wayfarers, out of the accumulated stores in the institution, with boots and clothes when they are obviously in need of them. We have been informed that similar good offices are frequently performed by the police in various parts of the country, and we are happy to record the evidence we have received, not only from officials but also from casuals themselves, of the benevolence of the police, individually and as an organization, in their handling of the vagrant problem.

50. Criticism of the existing system falls therefore under three main heads:—

- (i) Casual wards are themselves a cause of vagrancy,
- (ii) There has been a signal failure in many cases to comply with the existing regulations, and even a failure in certain wards to provide accommodation which affords the elementary decencies of life.
- (iii) Except in isolated areas the system as now administered fails to comply with the principle that the needs of each individual applicant for relief should be considered, and that the help given should not merely relieve the immediate destitution but should be in such a form as is most likely to enable the recipient to find his place in the life of the community.

## V. GENERAL PRINCIPLES.

51. Our recommendations are, in accordance with our terms of reference, limited to matters concerned with the administration of the existing laws, but before we proceed to set them out we think it desirable to refer to some of the general principles which we have kept before us in our consideration of the matter.

### (i) *The Right to Wander.*

52. If the casual problem were entirely new we think it unlikely that the casual ward system would be chosen as the best way of dealing with it; but the law admits the existence of the destitute wayfarer and wanderer, and prescribes his relief by the provision of casual wards. We cannot agree, however, that all and sundry, wherever they might choose to wander, should be given the right to be relieved as casuals, and obtain the accommodation provided in casual wards. The laws relating to the casual poor were passed before there was any general public machinery for dealing with unemployment such as now exists in the Ministry of Labour and its employment exchanges, and whilst in those days a man in want of work might to his own and to the public advantage have been acting wisely in setting out on tramp in search of it, under present conditions the habit of tramping no longer serves any purpose in the labour market which could not be more effectively achieved by employment exchanges. We quote the following extract from a memorandum prepared for us in the Ministry of Labour:—

“Men are not expected, still less encouraged, by the Department to walk the country in search of work. One of the chief objects of the employment exchange system was to remove the need of unemployed persons to tramp about looking for work. It has not been possible to achieve this object completely since not all vacancies are notified by employers and engagements are still obtained by personal application at employers’ premises. Whilst men who draw unemployment benefit are expected to make efforts to obtain work by personal application to employers, in so far as such applications in the trade and district are likely to be fruitful, they would not be expected to travel away from their home areas.

“Instances, of course, occur where a man desires to go to some other district in search of work . . . If he is drawing benefit and wishes to claim for the days when he is away from his home town he must indicate the district to which he intends to go and satisfy the local Exchange Officer that he is bona fide seeking work there and that there is some prospect of his obtaining it. A card known as a vacant ticket is then furnished to him. This enables him to prove unemployment the next day by signing the unemployment register at the town named

on the ticket. At this town the card can be similarly marked on to some further town which is either the man's destination or is on the route to it.

"An incentive to insured persons to obtain work at a distance through the Exchange, instead of tramping in search of it, is afforded by the provision that if they are sent to a distant job by the Exchange one half of their railway fare in excess of 4s. can be paid from the Unemployment Fund. To any worker, whether insured or not, for whom employment is found at a distance of more than five miles, an advance by way of loan to meet the cost of the fare can be made."

53. We understand that advances of fares to enable persons to proceed to employment at a distance have during the three years ended 31st March, 1930, been made by the Ministry of Labour to over 97,000 cases. Of these 45,000 men and boys and 1,700 women and girls were transferred from depressed mining areas.

54. We were interested to find that the official view of the Ministry of Labour was confirmed by one artisan witness who had himself had some experience of life in casual wards. In reply to the question whether he thought it desirable that a man should go off tramping from one end of the country to another he said:—

"It is in some cases but not in others; take for example a skilled man who has his trade at his finger ends. The firm he is with in that part of the country where he lives may have a slump just as they have been having in Newcastle. There are different parts of the country where engineering is carried on still and he hears or else he sees from the Labour Exchange Clearance Gazette that there are men wanted in one of those parts of the country. If the man is in the position that he cannot raise funds enough to get there, he sets off to walk and when he gets there he may be lucky or he may not be. On the other hand, with a man who is unskilled he may as well stay where he is because everywhere you go everyone knows the demand for unskilled men is very small. If you are going on a blind chance in person, just to see the foreman and state your case to him, you can tell him exactly what you are and give him an idea of yourself, and even if he is not wanting a man desperately you may be able to trust to his Christianity or good nature to give you a job, if only for a week or two. The men you meet in the casual ward in a town and the men you meet in the country are two different classes altogether. There is a class of man I have met roaming round the country that will not go inside a town to live. They keep going on circulating round these country casual wards year in and year out and they will not come near a town. They have their pack on their back and a tin tied to their belt—what they call a drum. Some of them have a frying pan or a tin lid. They will not



come into the cities and year in and year out they are travelling round the country. When I have been in association wards I have listened and have heard two old timers talking and I have heard one say "I was in such and such a place ten years ago" and another would say "Oh, I was there eleven years ago and it was just skilly," and I have even heard them talking about being in places twenty years ago."

55. We are satisfied that every effort should be made to prevent people from becoming vagrants, but we cannot accept the contention mentioned in paragraph 34 that the abolition of casual wards would result in the disappearance of casuals. Destitute wayfarers and wanderers would continue to tramp the roads and, unless the law were radically altered, poor law authorities would continue to be under legal liability to relieve their destitution, but the safeguards which the casual ward system provides against the spread of infection and contagious disease and against unjustifiable applications for relief would have disappeared unless something like the existing casual ward system were continued.

56. But while we regard the continuance of the casual ward system as for the present unavoidable, we think the law will be adequately observed if casual wards are provided only along those routes which, in the opinion of the responsible authorities, are most suitable for the use of wayfarers.

#### (ii) *Deterrence.*

57. The life of a vagrant is unprofitable both to the vagrant himself and to the community at large, and anything which would be likely to encourage destitute persons to embark upon such a life would be contrary to the public interest. As one witness put it:—

"The administration of relief to casuals represents a compromise between two conflicting ideas, the liberty to search for work and the evils of a nomad life; hence the casual ward system is an attempt to counterpoise amenities by disabilities and to provide a circulatory system for wayfarers at once humane and unattractive."

58. We have considered at some length how far a system of deterrence in casual wards does in fact tend to keep down the number of persons who become vagrants. Deterrence by mere discomfort such as the provision of unpalatable food, uncomfortable sleeping accommodation, harsh or unprofitable task, or unsympathetic reception, could not be recommended by anyone. It is, however, a curious fact that what to the normal man would be the most deterrent conditions of a casual ward, such for instance as lack of bathing facilities, is to the worst type of habitual casual a positive attraction, and we have been told by many witnesses that the

worst managed wards are most popular with the lower type of habitual tramp.

59. One witness said:—

“In those wards where the least regard is paid to rules and regulations there also you get overcrowding. The difference is that you get the very worst type in the bad ward, because if they are allowed to go there without any question being asked, are allowed to snatch their piece of bread and margarine, are not required to wash, are not required to have a bath, are not required to take their clothing off or anything of that kind and are simply huddled in, that suits some of them very well, particularly if they are in drink.... I have not the slightest doubt about this, that if you put a thoroughly bad casual ward next to a first-class one there are large numbers of men who will prefer to go into the bad one.”

60. Another witness, a poor law officer, told us that the result of improving the amenities of his casual wards, in which every bed was provided with clean sheets and a pillow case and every effort was made to find outside employment for the inmates of the ward, was that habitual casuals very seldom applied for relief at that ward.

61. We have had evidence which showed convincingly that such things as the provision of no other liquid food but gruel and the insistence on searching have had the effect of reducing the number of wayfarers who apply for relief at casual wards in which these practices prevail, but this does not, in our view, justify the assumption that the adoption of such practices throughout the country would result in a general reduction of the number of persons frequenting casual wards. Given the option between a ward at which tea can be obtained and one at which gruel only is supplied, wayfarers will doubtless choose the former, but the problem to our mind is in the main that of preventing men from becoming vagrants and we find no reason to believe that, before embarking upon a life of vagrancy, anyone weighs up its relative comforts and discomforts.

62. It must, however, be borne in mind that there are persons in various forms of casual employment, or in receipt of small pensions, who could, if not permanently, at least from time to time, afford to maintain themselves in lodging houses or elsewhere but prefer to spend their earnings on other commodities and to look to casual wards for free shelter.

63. We have come to the conclusion that, with certain safeguards against the admission to casual wards of persons who could if they liked provide for themselves, a general raising of the standard of accommodation and treatment would not tend to attract men to a life of vagrancy but would have the result of improving

the self-respect of the casual population and making it easier for them to regain their proper places in the life and work of the community.

(iii) *Uniformity.*

64. Save that a local authority has certain limited discretion as to the dietary, the tasks, and the early discharge of certain classes of casual, the existing system contemplates an almost rigid uniformity of administration in casual wards. There is much to be said in favour of uniformity; it simplifies the work of the responsible officer and it saves trouble with casuals, who after a short experience know exactly what they can expect. The master of a poor law institution put the case for uniformity to us as follows:—

“We cannot take steps to treat one man differently from the others in the casual ward. I have in mind not my institution..... but smaller institutions which constitute the majority of those in the country. In those, at the present time, it is impossible to classify these men in any shape or form. If any attempt is made to favour any man, however well deserving he may be, you are immediately up against trouble with the remainder. I had it only last week in my own institution. We gave a man the opportunity of staying in for a few days, which he had asked for; he was treated rather better than the others. The result was we had trouble in the casual ward. They said: ‘Why do you treat this man differently? We are just as deserving as he is.’ There is no argument against it.”

65. In the opinion of another witness many of the committals to prison on account of breaches of the law by casuals are due to the great diversity in task and treatment as between the strictly and leniently conducted casual wards. A man who has passed through three or four casual wards, each of which he was allowed to leave on the morning after his admission, has possibly some excuse for feeling and expressing resentment when on the next occasion on which he is relieved as a casual he finds he will be kept in the wards two nights and be called upon to do a task of work on the intervening day.

66. The fact remains, however, that uniformity rigidly observed does not accord easily with remedial and reformatory work, and in considering such a subject as the relief of casuals the advantages and the drawbacks of uniformity need to be carefully balanced.

(iv) *Begging.*

67. We are in full agreement with the view expressed by the Departmental Committee of 1904 (Chapter XIII) that the habit of vagrancy is much encouraged, especially amongst the aged, infirm, and persons with infant children, by the prevalence of

indiscriminate almsgiving, including its modern manifestation the offer of free "lifts" in motor cars.

68. It would be folly to hope that any measures, even a law against indiscriminate almsgiving, will ever prevent the normal citizen from helping a beggar whose story excites his pity, but we feel that greater discretion in the private distribution of alms would result if the public were better informed of the assistance which is available to wayfarers in casual wards and could with full truth be assured that such assistance was adequate. So long as any casual wards fail to provide clean, decent and reasonably comfortable accommodation and an adequate dietary such assurance cannot be given. A witness who admitted that he regularly helped tramps to such an extent that, if everyone else in his position followed his example, there would be more vagrants in the country than the authorities could control, said that he felt impelled to act as he did because he thought casuals were under existing conditions "not getting a square deal."

69. Other witnesses called our attention to the fact that, as regards accommodation and dietary, conditions in casual wards compare unfavourably with those in prisons, and they justified almsgiving to wayfarers on the ground that poor men who keep out of prison deserve some reward for avoiding breaches of the law, despite the additional comforts they could obtain by becoming convicted law breakers. We have no doubt that these witnesses underrate both the degree of self-respect which prevails amongst poorer wayfarers and their proper repugnance to the disgrace and complete loss of liberty which a sentence to prison entails. The evidence we have obtained shows that it is rarely that men deliberately commit offences with the intention of getting into prison. The governor of a prison informed us in this connection that:—

"Any comparison which the casual makes between prison conditions and those of the casual ward is invariably in favour of the former, but very few casuals voluntarily seek a sentence of imprisonment, however short. If it comes, the older men accept the resultant shelter and rest from tramping with a good grace, but the better housing, sleeping and feeding conditions and attendance at the prison are not preferred in any but isolated cases to the retention of liberty."

70. We feel, therefore, that the standard of accommodation and dietary in casual wards should be such as to satisfy ordinary and reasonable members of the public that begging for food and shelter is unnecessary and unjustifiable.

#### (v) *Compulsory Detention Colonies.*

71. Whenever the problem of vagrancy has been considered proposals for compulsory detention in labour colonies of certain

classes of habitual vagrants have been put forward ; such proposals were an important feature of the recommendations of the 1904 Committee and found a place in the Maclean report, as well as in the report of the Minority of the Royal Commission of 1909.

72. We, also, have received representations on the subject and, though our terms of reference would have precluded us from making recommendations in the matter, we found it necessary to consider how far, if at all, we were hampered in our consideration of the administration of the existing law by the absence of any power to recommend compulsory detention.

73. When the problem was under consideration by previous committees the reformative, as distinguished from the penal, principle of prison discipline was not so fully developed as it is to-day. The kind of treatment then advocated in a detention colony has since been adopted in prisons and more particularly in Borstal Institutions for youthful offenders.

74. A detention colony for a person whose qualifications for admission are that he finds a vagrant's life more attractive than that of a workman should in justice be less restrictive and less penal than the institution to which active criminals are consigned. Short sentences in a detention colony would clearly be quite useless, either as a deterrent or for the purpose of reformation. We must therefore face the fact that a man needs to pass two or three years in a detention colony if he is to derive any permanent benefit from the treatment and training he receives there.

75. If the object of a labour colony is deterrence, it is necessary to be satisfied that the subject under treatment has had every opportunity to lead a useful life and has persistently refused or neglected to avail himself of these advantages. We feel that the public, on whose opinion sanction to legislation and policy depends, is not yet satisfied that there is any great number of habitual vagrants who have had such advantages. We hope that in time, if our recommendations are adopted, it will be possible to say that a man must, in the course of his wanderings, have had adequate opportunity offered to him to alter his way of life, but until that time arrives we should find it difficult to recommend the establishment of labour colonies as a deterrent to vagrancy. We feel that there is little use in inventing new crimes and new lines of treatment when the present means of dealing with recognised offences connected with vagrancy are not enforced because public opinion is not on the side of their enforcement.

76. If the object of a labour colony is reformation, the question must be approached from another side. Detention against his will, even in a man's own interests, must still be regarded as indistinguishable from imprisonment, since the main deterrence of prison, to a large majority of the people found there, rests in

the loss of liberty. During our visit to Pentonville Prison we talked to a few of the prisoners who had had experience both of prisons and casual wards. There was no doubt in their minds that they were better treated in prison than in the average casual ward; they confessed to being better fed in prison, better housed and better treated by the officials, but, to a man, they preferred casual wards to prisons because in casual wards they were free to come and go as they wished.

77. It is more than probable, therefore, that a man of the recidivist type will always regard a labour colony as a place to be avoided at all costs and will not co-operate with the authorities of such an institution in working out his own salvation there. We do not wish to imply that the Borstal system cannot reform young criminals sent to those institutions. It can and does, with a striking measure of success. But it is one thing to deal with an impressionable youth whose outlook on life is unformed and whose experience is limited: it is another to deal with a man in middle life, whose longer experience has taught him that it is possible to exist without toil, and to expect from such a man a complete change of heart and a willing co-operation.

78. A compulsory labour colony must presumably provide:—

- (i) safeguards against escape,
- (ii) some simple industries on which to employ the inhabitants who would include men of all trades and no trade, and in whom the capacity for useful work would often be very low, and
- (iii) punishment for failure to work.

All these are the constituents of a prison régime.

79. Experience abroad is, according to such information as we have been able to obtain, that the reformatory effect of a compulsory detention colony is very little, except where each inmate can receive concentrated personal treatment. This experience coincides with that of the reformatory institutions in England and Wales. The success obtained in the voluntary homes mentioned later in the report is, we are convinced, due mainly to the personal influence of those in charge of the homes and to the fact that the inmates are selected. The strikingly successful results of the Borstal system are also due to the highly trained and enthusiastic staff which has been secured for its institutions and to the fact that only youths under the age of 21 are admitted. Unless detention colonies were run on similar lines, as comparatively small institutions each containing inmates more or less of a class, and were staffed by highly specialised officers, their reformatory value would probably be very small and in any case they would necessarily be so very much like modern prisons that it is unlikely that the Courts, the public and the inmates would appreciate the difference.

80. Moreover, if such colonies could be made beneficial, it would be difficult to restrict their advantages to the limited number of beneficiaries who would be found in casual wards. Casuals are not a race apart and what is good for them would be equally good for a larger section of the population. If these colonies are to come, they should, we think, provide for the whole of the class which needs something by way of compulsion to rehabilitate it and logically at all events should be conducted on the broader lines recommended in the minority report of the Royal Commission of 1909.

81. We should like to make it clear that we have discussed in this section of our report only the kind of colonies in which habitual vagrants would be sent by order of courts of justice and detained against their will, either until they shewed signs of amending their way of life or until the sentence of detention expired. We see a great difference between these colonies and the establishments which we recommend later in our report which men will enter and leave of their own free will.

82. We have also had almost exclusively in mind casuals who are capable of working and might in happier circumstances be self-supporting. We must not be understood as arguing against the possibility of some measure of compulsory detention being extended to casuals who, in the words of the Committee of 1904, are "wandering to their own hurt." As we have explained the road cannot now be barred to any casual unless he is suffering from dangerous infectious or contagious disease or is a lunatic. The man whose state of health is such that he may fall dead by the roadside, the woman with the mental capacity of a child of eight and the boy or girl who should be at school are all free to travel on from casual ward to casual ward. Nothing but persuasion can be used at present to take such people off the road and no administrative change can make persuasion invariably effective.

83. We recommend later means by which mental deficiency authorities should have brought to their notice any casual who seems to be a feeble minded person subject to be dealt with under the Mental Deficiency Acts, as it appears to us possible that, if such cases were followed up, many of them might, in course of time, be removed from the dangers to which they are now exposed. We have also ventured to suggest that an amendment of the Children Act might benefit many vagrant children.

## VI. RECOMMENDATIONS.

84. With these general principles in mind, we have considered in detail what should be provided in casual wards and how casuals should be treated to secure the ultimate object of stopping vagrancy at its sources and making casual wards unnecessary.

### (i) *Accommodation and Reception.*

85. A casual ward should in our opinion contain a shelter or waiting room, a receiving room, one or more day rooms and grounds for work and exercise. There should be a separate sleeping cubicle for each casual, properly lighted and furnished with a bedstead with a wire mattress, a stuffed overlay, an adequate supply of blankets and sheets, and a pillow. The cubicles should normally not be locked at night or at most only so far as to prevent intrusion. Every casual ward should have proper facilities for bathing and the baths should be separated by screens or partitions. Racks with pigeon holes should be supplied so that each man's clothes and belongings can be stored separately. Mirrors and other facilities for shaving should be provided. Any casual who wishes to repair his clothes should, after his day's work is finished, be supplied with mending materials. We see no objection to smoking being allowed at prescribed times and with reasonable precautions against fire. Books and newspapers should be provided; every facility should be given to casuals to attend Divine Service on Sunday. We have heard evidence of arrangements being made for special services on Sundays in casual wards and have been told that such services were much appreciated. We think that the attention of chaplains should be called to this and that every endeavour should be made to break the monotony of the casuals' Sunday by these and other means, such as visits by persons of good will.

86. We do not propose to recommend anything in the nature of a definite time-table for a casual's day, but we suggest that the routine might be somewhat on the following lines:—When a casual has been admitted and registered he would be passed into a day room, given his supper and allowed to smoke and read. When his bath is ready his day clothes and possessions would be handed over to be stored, and, if necessary, dried and disinfected; after his bath he would go to bed. On the next morning he would have breakfast in the day room followed by four hours' work. An hour would be allowed for dinner and rest in the day room and after four hours' more work he would have supper, be allowed to smoke, read, wash and mend his clothes, clean his boots, shave, etc., and so to bed. On the morning on which he leaves he should have breakfast in time to allow him to set out early enough to have a fair chance of getting work.



(ii) *Situation and number of casual wards.*

87. Casual wards have, generally speaking, been provided wherever there happened to be a general poor law institution. These institutions were erected to meet the needs of the settled poor of the union, without regard to the wants of the homeless poor; the result is that in thickly populated areas a wayfarer may have a journey of only a few miles from one casual ward to the next, while in rural parts of the country the journey may exceed twenty miles. Where Vagrancy Committees are active, some of the redundant wards have, with the consent of the Minister of Health, been closed, but an examination of a map of England and Wales on which the wards still open are marked has shown us that much remains to be done in ward-planning to meet present-day needs.

88. It is not easy to lay down a hard-and-fast rule as to the appropriate distance between adjoining wards, but the general opinion seems to be that fifteen miles is a reasonable distance and we are not prepared to differ from it.

89. It is important that casual wards should be provided at regular intervals on or near the main roads along which wayfarers may reasonably wish to travel. Close co-operation between the local authorities, or combinations of local authorities, responsible for the relief of casuals will be necessary for the work of ward-planning.

90. We have heard that in some instances men applying for admission at a casual ward are sent to a relieving officer, or to the police station if a police officer acts as relieving officer, for an order of admission to the ward. This system, which to our mind is due to a misreading of the regulations, entails unnecessary journeys for casuals and we think that the normal procedure should be for the officer in charge of every casual ward to deal with each applicant for admission on his own responsibility.

91. From what we have seen and heard, we are convinced that the London system, under which casual wards are entirely separate from any other institution and are staffed with officers who have no other work than the relief of casuals, has substantial advantages and should as opportunity offers be generally adopted. Such a system will necessarily be more expensive in some respects, for when on the other hand a casual ward is part of a general institution common services for cooking, heating, hot water supply, and medical treatment are more readily and economically available. As a result of recent legislation, however, poor law institutions will tend to become more and more specialised as time goes on; the retention of a casual ward in an institution which is to be reserved for mentally defective patients or for the acutely sick will clearly be undesirable and the need for providing separate accommodation for casuals will increase.

(iii) *Searching.*

92. Section 43 of the Poor Law Act, 1930, which is a consolidation of the previous poor law enactments, provides that, on application for relief by any person representing himself to be a casual poor person, the master or other officer of the workhouse, or the relieving officer to whom the application is made, may cause him to be searched; Article 128 of the Public Assistance Order, 1930, which is again a consolidation of previous orders, provides that every casual shall on admission be searched and all articles in his possession taken away and restored to him on his discharge.

93. If the routine we have suggested in paragraph 86 is followed the need for searching every casual admitted will disappear, as, before they go to bed, men will have handed over their clothes and all their possessions. If the officers in charge of casual wards have good reason to suspect the bona fides of any applicant for admission they will, however, remain possessed of their statutory right to search him.

(iv) *Bathing and Disinfection.*

94. No casual ward can, in our opinion, be considered properly managed unless every casual can be given a hot bath, together with a towel and nightshirt which have not been used by anyone else since they were last washed. We should not have thought it necessary to mention these points if we had not received convincing evidence that it is now by no means unusual for casualse to be required to use towels and nightshirts which have been used by others and sometimes even to bathe in water which others have already used. Such practices are not merely unsavoury but may be active factors in the spread of infectious and contagious disease and cannot be too severely condemned.

95. Arrangements for disinfecting are more difficult to provide than baths, but are equally necessary. The only safe disinfection is, we are advised, by means of dry steam and the installation of such apparatus is expensive. Disinfecting casualse's clothes should not be a matter of routine, and only those clothes which are found to need it should be so treated. In every ward casualse should be enabled to wash and dry their underwear. Drying apparatus for their outer garments in wet weather is needed in every ward, and this can be used for underwear.

(v) *Detention.*

96. We think that the practice favoured in some casual wards of differentiating in the matter of early discharge between work seekers and other casualse throws upon the officers in charge of these wards a difficult duty, viz., of distinguishing persons desirous of seeking work from other inmates. Some of the poor law officers who gave evidence before us explained that:—

"the period of detention in a casual ward is too brief to permit of an adequate test of desire for employment, neither could such a test be applied under present conditions: reliance has perforce to be placed on such documentary evidence as the man can submit."

We think it should be the general rule that every person relieved in a casual ward should be detained for two nights, except in the circumstances mentioned later (paragraph 102).

97. In view of the special reference in our minute of appointment to persons seeking work, we feel compelled, even at the risk of repeating arguments and re-stating facts, to set out in some detail the grounds on which we have come to the conclusion that the common practice, which is not in accordance with the regulations, of releasing such persons on the morning after their admission should no longer be followed. The practical objections to the arrangement are that it is not in fact always possible for officers in charge of casual wards to decide which casuals are work seekers; that the present attempt to discriminate is apt to cause ill-feeling; and that walking day after day for twelve or fifteen miles is likely to exhaust work seekers and make them unfit for employment, whereas suitable work on alternate days in casual wards, with the improvement we recommend in the dietary, will help to keep them fit. But there are to our minds more important objections of principle. Walking is paradoxically one of the most expensive as well as one of the slowest forms of travel. For men who have a definite prospect of work at a distance from their homes dispatch is all important and we cannot think that they should be expected to go on foot or to look for shelter in casual wards—all such cases should in our judgment be dealt with by the machinery of the employment exchanges, the officers of which are in a far better position to judge of the prospects of employment than superintendents of casual wards can be. Employment exchanges already supply some of the additional labour at particular seasons on farms and market gardens and could, we believe, given the full co-operation of employers, supply it all and thus meet a need which is sometimes urged as a justification for not impeding the free movement of wayfarers. Employment exchanges, as we have already pointed out, are designed to give all the help they can in finding work for unemployed men, in advancing fares to persons for whom work is found, in transferring men and women from derelict areas to more prosperous places and in training and reconditioning those who need such treatment. Men who are fit and ready for work should therefore be the concern of the Ministry of Labour and not of vagrancy authorities, whose function should be not to hasten the workless along the roads but to use every endeavour to keep them off the roads.

97a. The population of casual wards, comprising as it does persons who, for various reasons, physical, mental or otherwise,

are not fit for employment, is such that it would be illusory to expect that the casual problem could be solved through a more extensive use of employment exchanges. We think, however, that the special movements of labour to which we have referred in the previous paragraph should, in everybody's interest, be regulated through the exchanges. In particular, we would mention the periodical influx of seasonal workers, some of whom make use of casual wards, during harvesting seasons. At such times the casual wards in the neighbourhoods affected become overcrowded by men in search of work in numbers greatly in excess of local needs. The men themselves are often disappointed and they are unwelcome and costly to the local authority concerned. We think that this undesirable movement of labour could be controlled to the public advantage if men required by farmers were engaged, as we are assured they could be, through employment exchanges. What would be necessary would, as we have mentioned above, be full co-operation between employers and exchanges, but we believe that, given this co-operation, a great improvement could be realised.

98. We see no case for providing anything at the public expense which helps or even appears to help, a working man to start on the tramp, and men already on the road who are most likely to benefit by help and sympathy would fail to receive such help unless they stayed in casual wards long enough to enable some sort of enquiry to be made into their circumstances. It would be difficult to do this if they arrived one evening and left early the following morning and the remedial measures we recommend later in our report would fail to come into play unless our recommendation that all men should stay at least two nights in a casual ward is adopted.

99. We have moreover found that in practical administration this right of early discharge has been seriously abused by the officers of some institutions and that in a number of casual wards, especially those less well managed, no attempt has been made to comply with the regulations regarding detention. The common excuse for the practice of early discharge is that unless at least the majority of the casualse are sent away after one night in the ward there is no room for the admissions next evening, but this excuse would not hold good if the two nights detention rule were generally observed. Early discharge increases rather than reduces the number of wayfarers who apply for relief as casualse.

100. The evidence which has been given to us tends to show that a properly arranged task of work is not at all disliked by the better class of casual, but will act as a check on those vagrants who have the money to provide themselves with a night's shelter.

101. It has been represented to us by several witnesses that there is in many parts of the country a serious shortage in lodging

house accommodation. This is said to be due mainly to the housing shortage, which has caused numbers of persons in permanent employment to find accommodation in lodging houses which are, therefore, often filled with permanent lodgers to the exclusion of wayfarers. A wayfarer who has the means to pay for his night's lodging if he can find one is not in our opinion a casual. Should such a man apply for accommodation to a poor law authority we think that the better course would be for his needs to be met in an ordinary poor law institution. Poor law authorities would in such a case have the ordinary right of recovering from him the cost of any relief so afforded. Where such cases frequently occur the need for additional lodging house accommodation, municipal or otherwise, would be obvious.

102. We recommend that an exception to the rule that casuals should be detained for two nights should be made in the case of wayfarers who hold "vacant tickets." These documents are issued by employment exchanges and are described in paragraph 52 of our report; their holders are in receipt of unemployment insurance benefit and normally should be able to pay for their board and lodging, but if any wayfarer with a vacant ticket happens to become destitute we do not think he should be impeded in his search for work, which has been authorised by the exchange authorities. We recommend, therefore, that the procedure described in the previous paragraph (101) should be applied to him even if he is unable to make an immediate payment for his accommodation. Holders of unemployment insurance books or health insurance cards should not, however, in our view be excused from the ordinary routine we recommend; all the considerations we have set out in paragraph 97 apply to them and they are as a class distinct from persons who hold vacant tickets. In this connection we should like to remark that we have been struck by a general lack of knowledge on the part of those concerned in poor law administration of certain important details of the social insurance system. For example, it is apparently a common practice, where casuals can produce unemployment insurance books to which contribution stamps have been affixed, to allow them to depart on the morning after their admission. An insured person should rarely find it necessary to carry his unemployment insurance book with him. If he is in work the book should be with his employer, if he is not it should be at the exchange. The vacant ticket we have mentioned above is, however, quite a different matter. We think it would be advisable for general information on the subject of insurance to be circulated to vagrancy authorities and we trust that the co-operation of employment exchange officers on the advisory committees which we recommend later will help to clear away existing misunderstandings.

103. Our attention has been called by the Ministry of Health to one of the results of the passing of the Local Government Act,

1929, under which county councils have replaced boards of guardians as local poor law authorities. Under the Casual Poor Act, 1882, a casual who was admitted on more than one occasion during one month into any casual ward of the same poor law union was not entitled to discharge himself before the morning of the fourth day after his admission. The alterations imported into the Poor Law Acts by the Local Government Act, 1929, have had the result that a casual who is admitted into any casual ward of the same county on more than one occasion during one month is liable to four nights' detention. We are aware that article 131 of the Public Assistance Order, 1930, is so framed that this detention is not obligatory, but it seems to us clear that the law as it stands does not express the real intention of the legislature and we should like to see it amended. We would suggest however that, where two or more casual wards are close together, it may be well in any amendment of the law to apply the London rule and make admission to more than one of certain groups of neighbouring wards in the course of a month carry with it liability to four nights' detention.

(vi) *Dietary.*

104. Most of the witnesses with whom we have discussed the matter of dietary have expressed the view that it is not satisfactory and that its very monotony if not its inadequacy gives an incentive to, and some excuse for, begging. It is true that the bulk of the available medical evidence goes to show that the majority of casuals are well nourished and Dr. Lewis in his report has stated that the nutritional condition of the majority compared favourably with that of the average person. It is impossible to obtain any information as to the number of persons who resort to casual wards regularly from day to day for any given period, but there can be no doubt that most casuals do in fact obtain jobs of some kind from time to time, and out of their earnings supplement the rations received in casual wards, whilst others get extra food by begging. We have, in the circumstances, considered the possibility of introducing some variety in the meals supplied. There would be practical difficulties in supplying inmates of casual wards with the meals which are given to ordinary inmates of poor law institutions.

We recommend:—

- (i) that the dietary now prescribed in the regulations should be amended so as to require the supply of two ounces of cooked or tinned meat at the midday meal on the day of detention in substitution for the half ounce of margarine or dripping at present issued;
- (ii) that the supply of some other form of vegetables in addition to potatoes should be compulsory at one meal in each day and not, as it now is, optional. Vegetables such as onions, radishes and lettuce could of course be served uncooked;
- (iii) that gruel should be deleted from the dietary.

(vii) *Task.*

105. We have already explained the need for casuals to remain for two nights in the ward in which they are relieved and we attach great value to the performance of a useful task on the intervening day. It would benefit ordinary wayfarers and serve as a test for the less desirable class of vagrant who could provide himself with board and lodging out of his earnings, insurance benefits or pension, but prefers to devote them to other purposes.

106. The difficulty of providing suitable tasks for casuals has been represented to us on several occasions. The normal tasks at present adopted are digging, wood-cutting, cleaning, stone-pounding and stone-breaking for men and cleaning, scrubbing and mending for women. Coal briquette making has been tried with some success in metropolitan casual wards, and in other wards unloading coal and making concrete posts and slabs have been found to be suitable and useful forms of work. Wood cutting and stone-breaking have the advantages that a casual can sit down while he is performing his task and is exercising his hands and arms but resting his legs and feet.

107. The question of the suitability of stone-breaking as a task has caused us some difficulty. It is the practice, we find, in some wards to require a casual, who is locked in a cell by himself, to break a given quantity of stone, often very hard, down to a specified standard of size, which is reached when it can be passed through a ring. As a task for all alike this is clearly open to the objection, among others, of inequality. Its severity depends on the skill or knack of the breaker and the quality of the stone. It comes easy to the habitual vagrant; it is well-nigh impossible to the inexperienced. We cannot too strongly condemn such a practice and we recommend its total abolition. But if done in the open, with a suitable material and a ready market for the broken stone, as we found to be the case in one ward we visited, we do not feel that the objection to stone-breaking as a task is equally strong. We are clear that it should not be used as a punishment, or as a deterrent, and we think there should always be an alternative task available for men for whom stone-breaking is unsuitable. The prejudice against stone-breaking as a form of task is, however, undoubtedly widespread and we think its adoption or retention in any particular ward should be subject to the consent of the Minister of Health.

It has to be added that one of our members, Mr. Arthur Shepherd, M.P., is in disagreement with the proposal that stone-breaking should be continued as one of the tasks for casuals, even with the restrictions and safeguards described above. Mr. Shepherd considers that a casual with a skilled trade may have his efficiency seriously impaired by being required to break stones and may, in order to avoid this task, feel compelled to sleep out or to commit

some other offence against the law; that it is impossible to expect the officer in charge of a casual ward to discriminate between men for whom the task would or would not be suitable, and that this would lay him open to accusations of favouritism or vindictiveness; that the task could rarely be made a profitable one and is repugnant to the class of workers most liable to unemployment, being looked upon by them as having penal associations and as entirely deterrent. For these reasons Mr. Shepherd holds strongly the view that stone-breaking should be entirely abolished as a task for casuals.

108. We have no doubt that, if local circumstances are studied and if a properly trained officer is available for supervision and instruction, useful and appropriate work could be provided in every casual ward, but in view of the varying circumstances of different neighbourhoods, we would allow a wide discretion as to the task imposed. Where nothing better can be devised, we recommend wood sawing and wood chopping.

(viii) *Medical Examination.*

109. The existing regulations recognise the necessity of every casual who wishes to see the medical officer being allowed to do so. But we have reason to believe that many casuals who would be the better for medical treatment fail for a variety of reasons to make application for it, and the evidence we have received leaves no doubt in our minds that there is an appreciable number of casuals who are certifiable under the Lunacy Acts. We think it necessary that the officer in charge of a casual ward should make a practice of bringing to the notice of the medical officer any casual who appears to be ill or suffering from mental disorder. We recommend also that the medical officer for every casual ward should be required at least once a month, but on no regular day of the month, to examine every inmate of the ward. Special efforts should, of course, be made to persuade any casual who, in the opinion of the medical officer, is in need of treatment to enter the appropriate institution, and we think it most desirable that the medical officer should direct the attention of the proper officer of the mental deficiency authority to any casual who seems to him to be a feeble minded person subject to be dealt with under the Mental Deficiency Acts.

(ix) *Officers.*

110. The practice of entrusting to inmates the duty of admitting casuals to the wards, serving meals and supervising the bathing and the performance of the task of work is, in our opinion, most objectionable. We recommend the appointment of properly trained officers for this work, including full responsibility for admissions. At some institutions the solution of any difficulty in an increase of the permanent staff may be found in engaging part-time officers for the work. It is no easy task to receive each



night an indiscriminate crowd of casuals, to make them reasonably comfortable, to maintain order and to ensure that they do a good day's work within the capacity of each. A man of parts is required for so difficult a post. We consider it most important that a higher stamp of officer should be entrusted with these duties. We recommend that the new poor law authorities should be strongly urged to see that this is done. Where wards are attached to an institution the chief officer of the institution should make a practice of visiting them frequently to ensure good administration.

111. We also think it desirable that there should be in every vagrancy committee area an officer who, as a regular part of his duty, visits frequently all the casual wards in his area and gives personal attention to individual casuals who appear to be in special need of advice or practical help.

(x) *Registration.*

112. We have, throughout our investigation, been confronted with the difficulties arising from the very imperfect information which is available concerning casuals, and we doubt whether some system of registration will not ultimately become necessary. As it would not be possible to introduce an effective system without legislation we feel that it will be beyond our province to make a definite recommendation on the subject, but we think it may perhaps be useful if we record the opinions we have formed.

113. To secure a properly working system of registration it would be necessary to attach either a definite advantage to possession of a registration certificate or a penalty for failing to possess one. We do not think this could be done unless casual ward authorities had power to detain for a period much longer than one day any person applying for relief who was not in possession of registration documents. By this means it would be possible to investigate the circumstances of every casual when he first embarked upon a life of vagrancy and to give him an opportunity of realising the dangers he was running in his new form of life. Any system of registration would necessarily entail the keeping of a central index and very careful safeguards would be required to prevent the abuse of registration documents and their use by persons to whom they did not properly belong. We have in this connection received considerable help from the Registrar General of Seamen and Shipping and we think that a form of registration certificate, not unlike that used in his Department and known as a Continuous Discharge Book, would be suitable for the purpose. We do not think that the difficulties of registration are insuperable or that the institution and management of the register would involve very great expense provided the necessary powers of detention were available.

114. We think it would be an advantage if some attempt were made at an early date to form a central record of certain types of case and we recommend that in the offices either of the Ministry of Health or of a central association of vagrancy authorities a register should be kept of the following classes of persons frequenting casual wards:

- (1) Children under 5.
- (2) Children under 14.
- (3) Youths under 25.
- (4) Persons who, in the opinion of medical officers, are physically or mentally unfit.
- (5) Persons who have been assisted to undertake a course of training or reconditioning.

If, whenever any person in any of these classes is admitted to a casual ward, particulars are reported to the office at which the central register is kept, we feel that in the course of time information will be available which will be of assistance in giving effect to the remedial and reformatory measures which we are recommending.

#### (xi) *Women Casuals.*

115. The number of women in casual wards is fortunately very small. The Ministry of Health have for some years past urged upon poor law authorities the desirability of relieving these women in the body of the institution instead of providing special casual wards for them and we recommend that the practice should be extended. In so far as women, casuals travel with men, the measures we are advocating for the betterment of men will be equally applicable to women. But there is a certain very small number of unattached women, generally of middle or of advanced age, who are habitual vagrants and present the same problems as do the men of similar age and habits of life. Aged women should be urged to settle down in an infirmary or other institution. We have received evidence that much useful work has been done in the past by the women inspectors of the Ministry of Health in securing improvement in the accommodation and treatment of women casuals and we recommend that this work be continued and its range increased.

#### (xii) *Children.*

116. There are very few children, though in our opinion far too many, to be found in casual wards, but the children are seldom ill nourished, badly clothed or ill-treated. We have received from the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children an interesting statement as to the extent of their activities; which may be summarised as follows:—

117. As soon as any neglected or ill-nourished children are admitted to a casual ward the officer in charge communicates with the local inspector of the Society, who attends and warns the parents

of the evil results which will follow if they persist in taking their children round the country from casual ward to casual ward or lodging house. In certain cases the poor law authority have exercised the powers given in section 52 of the Poor Law Act, under which the authority may resolve to assume parental rights over deserted children or the children of parents who, by reason of mental deficiency or vicious habits or mode of life, are unfit to have control of the children.

118. We are aware of the very strong arguments which can be advanced against proposals to remove children from their parents and agree that, even when the habits of life of a parent are prejudicial to the best interests of the child, the removal of the child may deprive the parent of one of his last incentives to an amendment of life. We cannot, however, see sufficient justification for any system under which children may be maintained at the public expense in a life of vagrancy. Though it is beyond our terms of reference we would express the hope that at an early opportunity such amendments may be made in the Children Act as to make legal action more easily practicable where parents are found to be wandering through the countryside with their children without providing them with proper education.

#### (xiii) *Classification.*

119. Many advocates of changes in the existing system have pressed upon us the desirability of classifying the inmates of casual wards and of segregating the various classes throughout their period of detention in the wards. Where cells or cubicles are provided for sleeping, it is, under present conditions, possible to arrange for a certain limited degree of segregation, but it is difficult, if not impossible, to avoid a general mingling of all the inmates of a ward during the daytime. Our difficulties in framing any proposals on this subject are two-fold, firstly to determine a suitable series of classes and secondly to devise means by which these classes could be kept apart from each other. We have already mentioned the practical impossibility of obtaining trustworthy information of the circumstances and predispositions of a body of men who wander about the country, never staying in one casual ward for more than two nights at a time. A registration system would help the process of classification, but at present it seems impossible to separate the inmates of casual wards into any but age classes. The evidence given before us shows that younger casuals are not necessarily morally superior to their elders but it may well be that, whilst the younger men are often more mischievous and a greater nuisance, there is more hope of their being weaned from the vagrant habit of life. We should like as opportunity offers to see every casual ward provided with two or more day rooms as well as with separate sleeping cubicles so that younger men could be kept apart from "old hands." We do not

suggest, however, that there should be any differentiation in the dietary, task and other conditions of the relief granted to the different classes. There is also to our minds an important distinction which may be drawn from the "road age" of casuals, that is to say, the period during which they have been leading a vagrant life. A man who has just started a life of vagrancy naturally will find it more easy to abandon the life and we think that these also need to be kept apart as far as possible from habitual tramps.

(xiv) *Remedial Measures.*

120. The work at present undertaken for the redemption of casuals is very limited. We have received evidence concerning the Home of St. Francis at Batcombe, in Dorset, which is run on voluntary lines and receives, mainly from masters of casual wards in the neighbourhood, young men under 30 who express a desire to forsake a life of vagrancy. There is accommodation in this home for about 40 all told, including the staff and guests other than those received from casual wards. The men are employed on market gardening, basket making, weaving, mat making and printing. The rule is that no person admitted from casual wards shall remain in the home longer than three months, but where desirable this rule is relaxed. The men work with and live with the staff, who are thus able to exercise considerable personal influence over them. Of 48 men who came and went during the year 1929, 30 obtained employment which they were still holding at the date of our enquiry. At the Wayfarers' Benevolent Society's Hostel at Heckmondwike, in Yorkshire, similar work is being done and this body has established a home quite recently in Essex.

121. One witness described to us how he receives into his own house two or three boys at a time who are under the age of 18, have not been more than six months on the road, and are recommended to him by the masters of the local casual wards. He does not provide the boys with any definite course of training but gives them food, light work and recreation until he is able to place them in employment. Of 66 boys so received 31 still hold employment in which they have been placed.

122. We have also received evidence from the Salvation Army, the Church Army and the Managers of the "Morning Post" Embankment Home and have visited institutions under their care in which former casuals, amongst others, are given opportunity and assistance to better their condition in life. The "Morning Post" Embankment Home provides for working men who have not means to pay for food and shelter. Men who are known to be vagrants or beggars are not admitted. Many men are sent to the home from the Embankment Night Office described in Appendix II. Men are free to leave when they choose and while they remain they work, mainly at wood-chopping; they may stay in the home

until they secure work or insurance benefit and if necessary until they draw their first week's wages. The work of the Salvation Army and the Church Army is too well known to need description here. The degree of success achieved by these voluntary workers is difficult to measure, as the managers cannot keep in touch with most of the men after they have left but we should welcome the provision of similar homes in other parts of the country.

123. Considerable differences of opinion have been expressed concerning the relative merits of voluntary and official centres for reformatory work. We think the methods of the voluntary bodies undertaking it should be carefully studied and the results recorded so that if, as may well be, similar institutions are set up under the control of the State or of local authorities, past experience may be available.

124. We have visited two of the training centres of the Ministry of Labour and have received evidence from officers of that Department. We were impressed with the work done at these centres in getting back into working trim men who were losing their value in the labour market through long spells of unemployment and in training youths from the depressed areas who had never had a chance of learning a trade at home.

125. The work of the Ministry of Labour is necessarily different from that undertaken by voluntary agencies which deal with vagrants, as the function of that Department in this respect is not to train men merely for the sake of keeping them fit but to choose from the permanently unemployed men who are most likely after a period of training to be able to obtain work which is reasonably within sight. We realise that it would be difficult, so long as there are more suitable candidates for admission to the Ministry of Labour centres, for even the best type of casual to secure training in them. In the event, however, of a general reduction in the number of persons permanently unemployed we trust that it may be possible for the more hopeful of the inmates of casual wards to receive the benefit of training in Ministry of Labour centres.

(xv) *Co-ordination of reformatory agencies.*

126. The need for close co-ordination between vagrancy committees, employment exchanges and voluntary bodies willing and able to accept for treatment vagrants who wish to alter their mode of life has been represented to us by many witnesses, one of whom said:—

"In my view it is one of the chief defects of the casual ward system that there is a lack of any systematic co-operation of reformatory agencies. The reason why I venture to lay down these general considerations is that it is impossible to understand or fairly to criticise the system unless you

ing men who have a title to unemployment insurance but, for one reason or another, have to wait some little while for their benefit. Residence in a poor law institution (including a casual ward) disqualifies a claimant from benefit and voluntary hostels are very useful in such cases.

(xvi) *Combinations of local authorities.*

129. In considering the more glaring defects in existing wards, we have been struck by the number of cases in which progress in securing improvement has varied with the strength of the combinations to which the individual poor law union was attached. Those vagrancy committees which have been entrusted by the constituent unions with the widest powers of closing redundant wards and of requiring the provision of new wards and the extension and improvement of wards which have been kept open, have been most successful in eliminating really bad wards, but unions which remained in isolation were generally those in which the accommodation was most faulty.

130. The proposals which we have recommended can only be made thoroughly effective if the new poor law authorities throughout the country are, for the purpose of the relief of the casual poor, combined in areas sufficiently large to provide:—

- (a) a vigorous central committee;
- (b) an officer specially entrusted with the duty of visiting casual wards regularly and of interviewing the inmates;
- (c) something in the nature of a "catchment pool" or hostel to which a casual who wishes to improve his condition can be sent and from which he can be referred to the appropriate agency for assistance;
- (d) a training centre, managed either by the committee itself or by a voluntary body working in co-operation with the committee, for the receipt of suitable cases;
- (e) a medical staff who can examine and ascertain the physical and mental condition of the casualse;
- (f) an advisory committee on which would be represented the voluntary charitable agencies concerned with the homeless poor, the local officers of the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Labour, the Watch Committee or Standing Joint Committee and the Public Assistance Authorities.

131. Witnesses differed as to the most suitable size of the areas so combined. Some said that a large area gave the committee a wider outlook and made it easier to provide such things as hostels and training centres; others argued that people would do things for their own county which they would not do for a larger area. In our view the balance of advantage is with the wider area of combination, and we consider that some twelve such

committees will be enough for the whole of England and Wales, as a larger unit will more easily be able to provide the various requirements set out in the previous paragraph.

132. We feel that it is important that committees should have adequate powers to develop the relief system within their areas without undue hindrance from the constituent local authorities. Boards of guardians have ceased to be since we began our inquiry, but we think it worth while, in view of the wider areas we are now advocating, to report the words of one of the general inspectors on the subject, as much of what he said would be applicable to joint committees of counties and county boroughs if such committees had little executive power.

"It is very difficult to get on with the matter if you have one body responsible for the policy and another body responsible for the buildings and the officers necessary to carry out that policy. I have met that again and again in regard to vagrancy committees. Under the system which is now passing away you get a vagrancy committee meeting—you attend it, and you convince them of the importance of detention, I will say. They agree unanimously with you and you think all is well. But not at all. All is not well, because it does not rest with the vagrancy committee whether the resolution shall be carried out, for example, by the construction of extra buildings and the provision of extra officers and so on, and when you go down to the local bodies who are responsible for these things you will find they are either apathetic or opposed to the idea; therefore it is very difficult to get the thing done."

133. Another witness with wide experience of local poor law administration said:—

"We have never been able to move as fast as the Joint Committee would like to go. We have to move through the local boards of guardians and we have found that in the areas where reform is most needed it has been difficult to effect on account of the cost of introducing it. We have not, in our order, any clause enabling us to contribute towards the expense of alterations. My Committee would have liked such a clause to be incorporated when the order was applied for, but we found we were up against such difficulties that we should never have got the united area we have if we had stressed the point."

134. We are aware of the provisions contained in section 3 of the Poor Law Act, 1930, and trust that it will be possible in the very near future for the combinations we have recommended to be brought into working order and clothed with all necessary powers.

## VII. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS.

135. If our recommendations are adopted there will be no spectacular change in the methods by which casuals are at present relieved or in the general arrangements in the best managed casual wards to-day. Casuals will, however, receive a less restricted dietary and will know when they enter a ward that, unless they hold vacant tickets, they will be required to remain for two nights and to work in the wards on the intervening day. Any medical or other treatment they need will be supplied and will be pressed upon them if necessary. They will be encouraged to keep themselves presentable in appearance, and every opportunity will be given them by the officers of casual wards, by members of local authorities, or by voluntary workers, to forsake a life of vagrancy and to enter whatever institution is most likely to benefit them. To secure the standard of accommodation, the staff and the voluntary assistance we have in mind will not, however, be easy if past experience is any guide. We give full credit for the improvements which have been obtained since the publication of the Survey made in 1924, and we can well imagine that, during a time of industrial depression and when changes in the structure of the local government system of the country were under consideration, progress in this particular sphere of administration was difficult to secure. But so much remains to be done that we feel it is fortunate our report will be available for consideration at a time when the duty of administration has been transferred to new local authorities, who, in the areas in which improvements are most urgently needed, will approach the subject with a fresh and open mind.

136. The following is a summary of the provisions we consider necessary:—

- (1) Proper arrangements for bathing, sleeping, cleansing, feeding and work.
- (2) Properly qualified staff to give casuals the personal attention they need.
- (3) Regular medical inspection.
- (4) Co-operation, by means of vagrancy committees, of neighbouring councils.
- 5) Co-operation by means of advisory committees representing the vagrancy committee, the standing joint committee or watch committee, the Ministry of Health, the employment exchange, and the voluntary bodies in the area specially interested in the assistance of destitute wayfarers and their restoration to the ranks of industry.

137. Full co-operation of the general public will also be necessary if satisfactory progress is to be secured, and we suggest that it should be part of the duty of every authority entrusted with the relief of the casual poor to give publicity to its work by the issue of reports shewing the ordinary reader the nature



and extent of the work done and the principles on which it is conducted. The public should be in a position to learn what is being done to help the destitute wayfarers and wanderers of the country and how best to co-operate in this difficult work. By this means we hope that something more will be secured than the removal of any reproach which may justly be directed to the conditions now prevailing in casual wards. We trust that if the relief of casuals is undertaken in the spirit which we have tried to indicate, the result will be to secure an improvement in their physical and moral condition. The personal attention to be given to each casual would enable prompt measures to be taken to help a man who enters a casual ward for the first time, and suitable provision offered to a man who by physical or mental infirmity is in need of institutional treatment. The present population of casual wards would in the result tend to be reduced at both extremes, and recruitment to its ranks would be arrested.

138. We look forward to a time when the need for casual wards will be no longer felt, but that time is not yet. Years must pass before we see the last of the army of wayfarers who now haunt our highways. Meanwhile some provision must be made and the character of that provision may do much to hasten the time when it is unnecessary. The standard of it, we think, may be raised without harm done, nay, with good effect. Better treatment will give an element of self-respect, a sense of the value of cleanliness and order, and a desire for such; it can do little more. We have thought good, therefore, to enlist voluntary effort. If an active co-operation is set up between the two, we look for the best results. Each can do its part. Decency and discipline can be secured by the one, a foundation laid on which the other can build, dealing as it does with the individual and appealing to motives of a more personal kind. We are far from denying that much may be done and is being done on these lines by enlightened administration but we feel that co-operation will make such service even more welcome and more effective.

## VIII. PROCEDURE.

139. We have held 40 sessions and received evidence from many sources, including government departments, poor law and other associations and officials, philanthropic bodies and individuals interested in vagrancy and in reformatory and social work. We have in all examined 36 witnesses orally. In addition we have read a number of special and annual reports of certain societies and bodies and much correspondence addressed to us.

140. A list of witnesses included in Appendix IV of this report.

141. We wish to record our deep appreciation of the generous help which these witnesses have given us and of their willingness to undertake further investigations on our behalf whenever we have asked and to afford all the information possible on particular aspects of our problem of which they had had special experience.

142. The written and oral evidence we have taken is so considerable in bulk that we cannot ask that it should be printed.

143. We have collectively visited casual wards in London and in the provinces; Salvation Army and Church Army establishments; the "Morning Post" Embankment Home; the Ministry of Labour Training Centres at Carshalton and Park Royal; the London Industrial Colony, Belmont, Surrey; Pentonville Prison; and the Borstal Institution at Feltham, Middlesex; and individually our members have visited a number of other casual wards and institutions both at home and abroad.

144. We wish to express our gratitude to the authorities and the officials of these establishments for their courtesy and help on these visits and for the work done by them for Dr. Lewis in the course of his investigation.

145. In conclusion, we have to thank you for associating with us as our Secretary, Mr. L. N. Ure, whose wide knowledge, courtesy and care have done much to lighten our labours, whilst his untiring energy and zeal have added not a little to their value. So too Mr. H. T. Wells, his colleague, has spared no pains in helping us by his watchful attention and unfailing accuracy.

L. R. PHELPS (*Chairman*)

J. A. DALE.

DOUGLAS H. HACKING.

A. B. LOWRY.

ALLAN C. PARSONS.

A. PATERSON.

ARTHUR SHEPHERD.

MARGARET WINTRINGHAM.

L. N. URE (*Secretary*).

*June 18th, 1930.*

## APPENDIX I.

CHAPTER I. OF THE REPORT OF THE DEPARTMENTAL  
COMMITTEE ON VAGRANCY, 1904-6.

## HISTORICAL SUMMARY.

*Legislation up to 1824.*

7. The existing law against vagrancy is the outcome of more than three centuries' legislation, and cannot be fully understood without reference to this previous legislation and the circumstances which gave rise to it. A chronological list of the statutes relating to vagrancy which have been passed up to the present time, with a note of their effect, is printed in the Appendix.\* (a) Some account of the statutes dealing with vagrancy as a criminal offence is given in the third volume of Stephen's *History of the Criminal Law*. He remarks: "In the times when serfdom was breaking down and when the statutes of labourers provided what might be regarded as a kind of substitute for it, provisions as to vagrancy were practically punishments for desertion. The labourer's wages were fixed, his place of residence was fixed; he must work where he happened to be. If he went elsewhere, he must be taken and sent back. By degrees the order of ideas which this view of the subject represented died away. The vagrant† came to be regarded rather as a probable criminal than as a runaway slave."

8. The modern history of the subject begins with an Act of 1495 (11 Hen. VII, ch. 2). The expressed purpose of this was to moderate the provisions of 7 Richard II., ch. 5—one of the latest statutes of labourers—and to save the cost of taking vagabonds to gaol and keeping them there, "wherby by likehede many of theym shuld lose their lives." Local authorities were accordingly bidden to search for all "vagaboundes, idell and suspecte persones lyvyng suspiciously" to put them in the stocks for three days giving them bread and water only, and then to turn them out of the town or township. An offender failing to depart was to be put in the stocks for another six days. This was accompanied by provisions requiring beggars unable to work to abide in the hundreds in which they were settled, and other provisions for the regulating of ale-houses and the suppression of dicing, cards, bowls, tennis and other unlawful games. A further statute couched in similar terms was passed in

\* A fuller account of the statutes will be found in Ribton-Turner's *History of Vagrants and Vagrancy* (London, 1887), a work which contains an immense amount of information on the subject.

† The word "vagrant" appears for the first time in any statute in 1547 (1 Ed. VI., ch. 3) where it is used as synonymous with 'vagabond' or 'loiterer.' Blackstone quotes 'ancient statutes' as defining vagrants to be "such as wake on the night and sleep on the day and haunt customable taverns and alehouses and routs about; and no man wot from whence they come ne whither they go." (Commentaries Bk. IV. ch. 13). The Act of 1572 (14 Eliz., ch. 5) defines "rogues, vagabonds and sturdy beggars" to include, among others, "every person being whole and mighty in body and able to labour, having not land or master, nor using any lawful merchandise craft or mystery, whereby he or she might get his or her living" and also "all common labourers being persons able in body using loitering and refusing to work for such reasonable wages as is taxed and commonly given in such parts where such persons do or shall happen to dwell." Under the Vagrancy Act of 1824 (5 Geo. IV., ch. 83) and the amending Acts a vagrant only becomes an "idle and disorderly person," or a "rogue and vagabond" or an "incorrigible rogue" upon conviction as such by a court of summary jurisdiction. The vagrant as now known to the Poor Law is termed a "casual pauper" which is defined in the Pauper Inmates Discharge and Regulations Act, 1871, as "any destitute wayfarer or wanderer applying for or receiving relief" in the casual wards.

(a) Not reprinted here.

1503 (19 Hen. VII., ch. 12) with more stringent provisions for compelling local authorities (sheriffs, mayors, high constables, petty constables and others) to carry it into effect.

9. In 1530 came the Act 22 Hen. VIII., ch. 12, which is stated in the preamble to be due to the increase of vagrancy and the consequent increase of crime and disorder; whipping was allowed as an alternative to the stocks, and besides vagrants begging under various pretences, persons professing to tell fortunes by means of "physyke, physnamye, palmestrye or other craftye scyence" were also brought within the purview of the Act. A second offence by one of the latter class might entail a whipping on two successive days, three hours in the pillory and the loss of one ear. The provisions for the execution of the penal part of the statute and also for the grant of licences to beg to impotent persons and others are exceedingly elaborate. Further provision for the able bodied as well as the infirm poor was made in 1535 by 27 Hen. VIII., ch. 25, coupled with severer punishment for the ruffler, sturdy vagabond or valiant beggar, who on being brought a second time before a justice of the peace might be marked by having the upper part of his right ear cut off, and after this, on conviction at quarter sessions of "wandring, loitring and idelnes," might be adjudged a felon and suffer death accordingly. Jurisdiction was expressly given to the knight marshall over all such sturdy vagabonds and valiant beggars as might haunt the Court at any place where the King's Highness might chance to be. In this Act, too, there are indications of the need for special measures to compel local authorities to enforce the law.

10. The need of this is explicitly mentioned as one of the chief reasons for the next statute on the subject, namely, 1 Edw. VI., ch. 3, the preamble of which declares that previous legislation "hath not had that successe which hath hyn wished, but partake by folishe pitie and mercie of them which shoulde have seen the said godlie lawes executed, partelle by the perverse nature and longe accustomed idelnes of the parsons given to loytringe." Under this statute all those who would not work nor "offer themself to labour with anny that will take them according to their facultie, and yf no man otherwise will take them doo not offer themself to worke for meate and drynck," or who after accepting employment ran away from it, might be taken as vagabonds before two justices who, if the charge were proved, were to order the offender to be branded forthwith on the breast with a V and "adjudge the said parsons living so idelye to such presentour to be his slave" for two years. If the slave ran away during the two years, he was liable on re-capture to be branded on the forehead or cheek with an S and adjudged a slave for ever. To run away a second time was felony punishable with death. If no private person took action justices were to proceed *ex officio*, and all local authorities were strictly enjoined to see to it that all vagrants should be enslaved. In 1549 the Act was repealed and the Act of 22 Hen. VIII. revived.

11. Further Acts followed (5 and 6 Edw. VI., ch. 2; 2 and 3 Philip and Mary, ch. 5; and 5 Eliz., ch. 3) which re-enacted existing law with slight amendments. Then in 1572 there came a more comprehensive statute (14 Eliz., ch. 5); sturdy beggars found hugging were to be "grevously whipped and hurte through the gristle of the right eare with a hot iron," unless someone would take them into service for a year. A second offence was to be deemed a felony, unless someone would take the offender into service for two years; a third offence was made felony without benefit of clergy. The Act was repealed in 1597 by 39 Eliz., ch. 4, but most of its provisions were re-enacted. Provisions as to branding and ear-marking were dropped. Branding (this time with an R on the left shoulder) was re-introduced for incorrigible or dangerous rogues by 1 James I., ch. 7, and appears to have remained legal till 1713. The Act of 1572, besides dealing with vagrants as criminals, contained elaborate provisions for the relief of the poor and the appointment of overseers of the poor, and the Act of 1597 was accompanied by another containing similar provisions for the same purpose (39 Eliz., ch. 3). The Act

of 1597 treated as rogues and vagabonds not only beggars of all sorts, fortune-tellers, and others using "like fantasticall imagynations," but also tinkers, pedlars, and petty chapmen, jugglers, fencers, bear-wards, minstrels and play-actors, other than "players of enterludes belonging to any baron of this realme or any other honorable personage of greater degree to be auctorized to play under the hand and seale of armes of such baron or personage." The law as laid down in 1597 remained substantially much the same through the 17th and 18th centuries, though it was more than once repealed and re-enacted, with amendments.

12. It has often been suggested that the multiplicity of statutes passed in Tudor times for the suppression of vagrancy and the apparent ferocity of the punishments they impose indicate the existence of a very serious social evil, but it is questionable whether this assumption is altogether justified. In the first place, the severity of the punishments is not peculiar to the vagrancy laws, but is a characteristic of all the criminal law of that period. A generation who were accustomed to the notion that all larcenies to an amount exceeding one shilling should be punished by death and that persons charged with felony, and refusing to plead, could properly be made liable to the horrible torture of the *peine forte et dure*, and who moreover had by a special Act of Parliament (22 Hen. VIII., ch. 9) introduced the novel punishment of boiling to death for poisoners,\* would be likely to look on whipping, branding, or mutilation as matters of small moment. Indeed it is probable that branding was not regarded as a punishment at all: it had been authorised in 1488 as a means of identifying persons who had been once admitted to benefit of clergy, and so preventing them escaping the proper punishment of felons a second time (4 Hen. VII., ch. 13), and it is probable that a similar reason led to its application to vagrants, just as at the present time sheep and cattle are branded and ear-marked for purposes of identification. Whipping was a punishment applicable at common law to all misdemeanants, and, at a time when imprisonment was scarcely known except as a means of enforcing a fine or a debt, it would be the most natural mode of punishing any of the less serious offences. Further, the penal provisions against vagrants were enacted contemporaneously with the establishment of poor relief for the aged and infirm, and with repeated attempts to build up a system for the correction and reformation of the vagrant.†

13. Again, it is clear from the wording of the statutes, as well as from other contemporary evidence, that so far from legislating to meet a widespread demand Parliament throughout this period was attempting to force on local

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\* This part of the Act, together with other Acts creating new forms of treason, was repealed by 1 Edw. VI., ch. 12, and, as it is not printed in full in ordinary editions of the Statutes at Large, it may be worth quoting at more length as an illustration of the temper of Parliament at the time when the most notorious statutes against vagrants were passed. After reciting that "the making of good and holsonne lawes and due execution of the same agaynste the offendours therof is the only cause that good obedyence and order hath ben preserved in this Realme," and that one Richard Roose, a cook of Rochester, had poisoned a certain "vessell replenysshed with yeste or barme" in the Bishop of Rochester's kitchen, and thereby caused the death of two persons besides poisoning others, the statute declares that the offence shall be adjudged high treason, that Roose "shall be therfore boyled to deathe withoute havynge any advantage of his clergie" and that all similar offenders should, in future, receive similar treatment. The Act also gave jurisdiction to justices at quarter sessions and justices of assize in the matter of the "counterfaytynge of coyne of any outewarde Realme suffered to passe and goo wythin this Realme by the Kynge's assente."

† Some account of the institutions designed for the latter purpose is given on page 69.

authorities a repressive policy which local authorities were disinclined to carry into execution. It was perhaps natural that, at a time when the old social system was in dissolution and the ties that for centuries had bound the rural population to the soil were being everywhere rapidly broken, the Government may have seen a social danger in everyone who attempted to earn a humble livelihood otherwise than by tilling the soil or exercising some recognised handicraft; but the country justices, the mayors of towns and the constables of hundreds and villages must have looked with different eyes on a policy that practically proscribed everyone who lived by providing amusement for the common people.

14. From the State papers of the period it is clear that great importance was attached by the Government to the enforcement of the vagrancy laws; in 1570-2 returns were received from many parts of the country of the number of vagrants who had been "stocked and whipped," with reports of the searches made for vagrants; about twenty years later trouble seems to have been caused by a number of men either returning from the wars or pretending to do so, and in some counties provost-marshals were appointed to deal with them. Numerous proclamations and Orders in Council were issued, and judges when going circuit took occasion to urge justices, high constables and others to be active in the matter, but there is a striking absence of any evidence to show that in the country generally the suppression of vagrancy was regarded as a matter of any urgency. There are a sufficient number of representations to Government on other subjects to make this fact of some significance, and its significance is increased by reference to other sources.

15. In London sturdy rogues and dangerous criminals have always abounded, but Shakespeare knew at least as much of the country-side as any burgess or knight of the shire who went to Westminster to legislate; and in the numerous pictures he has given us of rural life a dangerous class of vagrants would surely have made their appearance if such a class had existed. Although no doubt the "vagrom men" whom Dogberry exhorted his watch to "comprehend" were to be found in the towns in considerable number, we find little evidence of a similar class in rural districts. Falstaff's followers, when Falstaff died, bid fair to become mere "rufflers and vallant beggars" of a dangerous kind, but in *Henry V.* we find one married to an ale-house keeper and another is hanged in France. Autolycus is a highly finished, though in some respects, no doubt, an ideal portrait of the vagrant as Shakespeare knew him, and assuredly Autolycus with all his roguery must have been on the whole a welcome feature at rural festivals rather than a social nuisance to be resented and suppressed. As a thief, he fears the gallows ("gallows and knocks are too powerful on the highway"), but he seems to be wholly unconscious of any legislation directed against him as a vagrant. Christopher Sly, again, "by birth a pedlar, by education a cardmaker, by transmutation a bear-herd, and now by present profession a tinker," was unquestionably an idle and disorderly person in the eye of the law, but over his head too the law with all its terrors passes harmless.\* No doubt the coming into existence of a pauper class was a new and alarming phenomenon of Tudor times; it is probable, too, that the suppression of the monasteries led to a large increase in the vagrant population, and there is no question as to the apprehension felt on this subject by responsible authorities, but we have no sufficient ground for concluding that the legislation against vagrancy as a criminal offence had its origin in any real condition of serious social disorder.

16. But, whatever view may be taken of the Tudor laws relating to vagrancy, the substance of the law remained in force for more than three

\* Shakespeare's silence with regard to the punishment of vagrants is the more significant as references are not uncommon throughout his plays to the whipping of women of Doll Tearsheet's type.

centuries. Some of the amendments made are of general interest. The Act of 1597, which may be regarded as the conclusion arrived at after a series of experiments in legislation, required the justices to build and equip houses of correction to be used in addition to the county gaols for vagrants. If any vagrants appeared "dangerous to the inferior sorte of people where they shal be taken or otherwyse be such as will not be reformed of their roghish kind of lyfe," they might be committed to quarter sessions and then either "he judged perpetually to the gallyes of this realme," or banished from the realm and at the cost of the county conveyed to such place abroad as might be appointed by an Order in Council. An Order in Council of 1603 prescribed "the New found Lande," the East and West Indies, France, Germany, Spain and the Netherlands, as places to which incorrigible rogues might be banished. The growth of the colonies during the 17th century provided ready means of ridding this country of the more disorderly elements of the population, moon-troopers from the horders, "malignants" and rebels. In 1682 power was given to transport sturdy heggars and idle and disorderly persons to "any of the English plantations beyond the seas there to be disposed in the usual way of servants" for seven years. The use of transportation as a substitute for the death penalty to which all felons were liable is a later development of the practice. The 2 and 3 Anne, ch. 6, an Act for the increase of seamen and encouragement of navigation, furnished another example of the attempts so persistently made by the legislature to get rid of the vagrant population by allowing rogues and vagabonds to be utilised for "Her Majestie's service at sea," instead of being sent to their parish or a colony.

17. Branding ceased to be legal in 1713, when the Act 13 Anne, ch. 28, repealed and re-enacted with some amendments the earlier statutes. After this period the amendments of the vagrancy law are chiefly remarkable for the new definitions of persons to be treated as vagrants. The offence aimed at was no longer merely the vagrant mode of life, but the fact that the vagrant became chargeable to the poor rate or (and this was considered the more serious offence) chargeable to a parish in which he had no settlement. The most striking illustration of the length to which this policy was carried is section 25 of 17 Geo. II., ch. 5, which empowered quarter sessions to order a public whipping and imprisonment for 6 months for any woman wandering and begging who is delivered of a child in a parish to which she did not belong. Later, however, the vagrancy law was extended to persons belonging to the criminal classes against whom actual felony could not be proved, *e.g.*, persons found in possession of housebreaking implements (23 Geo. III., ch. 88) and suspected persons and reputed thieves frequenting public places with a felonious intent (39 and 40 Geo. III., ch. 87, s. 12; 51 Geo. III., ch. 119, s. 18).

18. By the beginning of last century the vagrancy law had become extremely complicated and it is probable that few magistrates were fully aware of the extensive powers they possessed under it. Fencers, bear-wards, play-actors not authorised by law, minstrels, jugglers and persons wandering abroad and pretending to be in search of harvest work or pretending to be gipsies or wandering in the habit or form of Egyptians were still rogues and vagabonds under 17 Geo. II., ch. 5. The recognised form of warrant for whipping a vagrant still required the constable to strip the offender "naked from the middle upwards and publicly to whip or cause him to be whipped till his body be bloody."\* An "end-gatherer," *i.e.*, one who collected or bought any ends or refuse of woollen goods, was liable to be dealt with as an incorrigible rogue under Acts passed for the encouragement of woollen manufacturers. Under section 28 of 17 Geo. II., ch. 5, anyone who knowingly gave a rogue or vagabond lodging or shelter and refrained from handing him over to a constable was liable to a penalty of not less than 10s. nor more than 40s., or in default one month in the house of correction. There were also a number of very

\* See Burn's *Justice of the Peace* (ed. 1814), vol. v. p. 610. The whipping of women was abolished by 32 Geo. III., ch. 45, s. 3.

elaborate provisions with regard to passes for vagrants when discharged from prison.\*

19. In 1821 a Select Committee of the House of Commons considered the laws as to vagrants. They were mainly concerned with the system of passing vagrants to their place of settlement, which had developed great abuses. The Committee recommended that the existing system should be abolished, and longer periods of imprisonment given for vagrancy offences. As a result of this Report, the existing legislation was in 1822 repealed *en bloc* by the Act 3 Geo. IV., ch. 40. Mr. Chetwynd, in moving for leave to bring in the Bill, stated that during the preceding 300 years, 49 Acts of Parliament had been passed, of which 27 were still in operation; he remarked also that in Wiltshire and an adjoining county as much as £2,587 had been spent from county funds in one year in "passing" vagrants. On the Second Reading it was remarked that £100,000 had been expended in all on this purpose during 1821. The object of the Bill was to remove the necessity for this expenditure and to consolidate the law, omitting all unnecessary and obsolete enactments. Another reason urged in Parliament was that there was at that time a danger of the vagrancy laws "becoming part" of the Poor Law. The Bill also considerably reduced the powers of magistrates with regard to vagrants, reducing the maximum term of detention from 7 years' transportation to 2 years' imprisonment, and not allowing whipping except by order of a court of quarter sessions. As finally passed the Act was only to continue in force till 1st Sept., 1824, and in that year another Bill was introduced which became the present Vagrancy Act (5 Geo. IV., ch. 83).

*Vagrancy Act, 1824.*

20. The Vagrancy Act, 1824, which is entitled "An Act for the punishment of idle and disorderly persons and rogues and vagabonds, in that part of Great Britain called England," repealed all former statutes on the subject. Under it, persons committing vagrancy offences are liable to punishment either as "idle and disorderly persons," or as "rogues and vagabonds," or as "incorrigible rogues."† Later statutes have provided that persons committing certain offences shall be deemed to come within one of the divisions mentioned, and in this way many offenders who are in no sense of the word vagrants have been brought under the laws relating to vagrancy. The offences dealt with by the existing vagrancy law (the Act of 1824 and subsequent amending statutes) are set out in a memorandum prepared by the Local Government Board. They may be divided into three distinct classes:—(1) offences of the kind created by the Tudor legislation, and committed by persons of a disreputable mode of life, such as begging, trading as a pedlar without a licence, telling fortunes, or sleeping in outhouses, unoccupied buildings, etc., without visible means of subsistence; (2) offences against the Poor Law, such as leaving a wife and family chargeable to the poor rate, returning to and becoming chargeable to a parish after being removed therefrom by an order of the justices, refusing or neglecting to perform the task of work in a workhouse, or damaging clothes or other property belonging to the guardians; and (3) offences committed by professional criminals, such as being found in possession of housebreaking implements or a gun or other offensive weapon

\* The history of these provisions is given fully in Mr. H. G. Codd's report to the Poor Law Commissioners of 1834 published in the Appendix [E] to their Report [H.C. 44]. An extreme instance of the results of the system is mentioned on page 18 of the former report. A widow with five children charged with "sleeping out" was committed to prison for 14 days and was at the expiration of that period to be "passed" on to her place of settlement. It was calculated that the party would take five weeks to reach their destination, while receiving 5s. a day during their journey from the public purse.

† These three divisions of offenders were first established by the Act of 13 Geo. II., ch. 24.



with a felonious intent, or being found on any enclosed premises for an unlawful purpose, or frequenting public places for the purpose of felony.

21. The offences which may be regarded as specially characteristic of the vagrant class are begging, "sleeping out," and certain offences in casual wards, such as refusal to perform a task of work and destroying clothes. Persons committing offences of the last mentioned kind are classed as "idle and disorderly persons" and are liable on summary conviction by a single justice to imprisonment with hard labour for fourteen days, or on conviction by a petty sessional court (which includes any stipendiary magistrate sitting alone) to a fine of £5 or imprisonment for a month with or without hard labour. Anyone committing such an offence after having been previously convicted as an "idle and disorderly person" is a "rogue and vagabond" liable, on conviction by a single justice, to imprisonment for fourteen days with hard labour, or on conviction by a petty sessional court to a fine of £25 or imprisonment for three months with or without hard labour. On a third conviction he becomes an "incorrigible rogue," and on conviction may be committed to prison and kept to hard labour till the next quarter sessions, when he is liable to a sentence of imprisonment for twelve months with hard labour. "Incorrigible rogues," if males, may also be whipped. Any person sleeping out without visible means of subsistence and not giving a good account of himself is a "rogue and vagabond," and may be treated on a second conviction as an "incorrigible rogue." An ordinary beggar is an "idle and disorderly person;" if he exposes wounds or deformities, or if he endeavours to collect alms or charitable contributions under false pretences, he may be charged as a "rogue and vagabond" and is liable on a second conviction to be treated as an "incorrigible rogue."

22. In addition to establishing these divisions of offenders, the Act of 1824 contained a provision authorising magistrates to grant certificates or passes to vagrants discharged from prison to enable them to reach their places of settlement, and to obtain relief from parochial authorities on the way. This pass system, which was a survival of a very old practice, was only carried out by four counties and soon fell into disuse. It was severely condemned in the Report of the Poor Law Commission of 1832, as having the effect of causing paupers to be sent to prison in order to obtain the benefits of the pass. With the exception of the provision as to passes, the Act of 1824 was a measure simply of repression; and in a way it was certainly effective, for the number of vagrants committed to prison rose from 7,092 in 1825 to 15,624 in 1832.

#### *Legislation and Administration since 1824.*

23. The reports made to the Poor Law Commission by their Assistant Commissioners went somewhat fully into the question of vagrancy.\* In the Report of the Commission it was stated that it appeared from the evidence obtained that vagrancy had actually been converted into a trade, and not an unprofitable one; and "that the severe and increasing burden arises from the vagrants by trade, not from those on account of destitution. We state, in proof of this, and the statement is more valuable, as it points out the remedy as well as the cause of the evil, that in those few districts in which the relief has been such as only the really destitute will accept, the resort of vagrants has ceased, or been so much diminished as to become only a trifling inconvenience. But it appears vain to expect the remedy from detailed statutory provisions. The tendency of legislation respecting the poor to aggravate the evils which it was intended to cure, a tendency which we have so often remarked is strikingly exemplified in that portion of it which respects vagrancy." The Commission expressed the opinion that vagrancy would cease to be a burden

\* See especially the reports of Mr. Bishop, Mr. Codd, Captain Chapman, and Mr. Henderson which are printed in Appendix (A) and (E) to the Report of the Poor Law Commission, 1834.

if the relief given to vagrants was such as only the really destitute would accept, but that this could not be effected unless the system was general; and they expressed their conviction that no enactments to be executed by parochial officers would in all parishes be rigidly adhered to unless under the influence of strict superintendence and control. They consequently recommended that the Central Board which was to be established for the relief of the destitute poor generally, should be empowered and directed to frame and enforce regulations as to the relief to be afforded to vagrants and discharged prisoners. But the Poor Law Act of 1834 which established the Central Board (the Poor Law Commissioners) made no special reference to vagrants, and several years passed before any regulations were made as to such persons.

24. Under the Poor Law as reformed in 1834 the primary duty of the guardians is to provide relief for destitute persons resident within their district; and for the discharge of this duty it is necessary to inquire into the circumstances of persons applying for relief, and to make sure by the use of a test or by other means that relief is not given from the public funds except in cases of real necessity. The provision of casual wards for destitute wayfarers not belonging to the particular district is clearly a duty of an entirely different character and was not contemplated by the framers of the Poor Law of 1834. But when workhouses had been established, vagrants applied for admission to them representing themselves to be in urgent need of relief. The masters of workhouses had no means of investigating the facts and had to deal with each case on their own responsibility. At that time workhouse inmates who had no settlement were maintained at the expense of the parish in which the workhouse happened to be; this made the relief of the vagrant in the workhouse more difficult and workhouse masters were pressed by the guardians to refuse such cases altogether. In 1837 the Poor Law Commissioners, on being appealed to by the Commissioners of Metropolitan Police with regard to this question, expressed the opinion that it was the intention of the Act that all cases of destitution should be relieved irrespective of the fact that the applicant might belong to a distant parish. They stated that it was the duty of the relieving officer to relieve casually destitute wayfarers and of the workhouse master to admit such cases to the workhouse. These cases were distinguished from beggars by profession, who were to be dealt with under the Vagrancy Act of 1824.

25. In 1838 the Poor Law Commissioners issued a circular letter to boards of guardians in the Metropolis calling attention to the correspondence with the Commissioners of Police, and pointing out the duties of guardians in relieving the casually destitute, and they suggested the adoption of arrangements for securing the performance of a task of work. This was followed by another circular in the next year, threatening with dismissal officers who neglected to relieve cases of urgent casual destitution. Thus it may be said that the Poor Law vagrant is an accidental result of the law of settlement. As a class, however, vagrants came to be recognised by the Central Authority who from this point issued a series of circulars and Orders dealing with them directly or indirectly. Between 1834 and 1848 vagrancy increased to an alarming extent in all parts of the country. This was probably in part due to the action of the Poor Law Commissioners as above mentioned, and partly to a great influx of Irish poor, owing to the famine in Ireland.

26. Under an Act of 1842 (5 & 6 Vict., ch. 57, sec. 5), boards of guardians generally were enabled to prescribe a task of work for persons relieved in the workhouse. The Act stated that this was to be "in return for the food and lodging afforded," but the guardians were not to detain any person against his will for the performance of the task for more than four hours after breakfast on the morning after admission. In the same year the Poor Law Commissioners issued a general Order requiring that vagrants should be kept in a separate ward of the workhouse, and dieted and set to work under regulations to be framed by the guardians and approved by the Commissioners. So early as

1837 arrangements were in force in Hatfield and certain other unions for exacting a task of work from vagrants relieved in the workhouse.

27. The Poor Law Act, 1844, contained a provision, which is still in force, authorising the formation of districts in London and certain other large towns for the provision of asylums for the temporary relief and setting to work of destitute houseless poor. Accordingly in 1845 the Poor Law Commissioners prepared a scheme forming districts in the Metropolis for this purpose, but it met with considerable opposition. In 1846 a Select Committee of the House of Commons was appointed to inquire into the manner in which the Poor Law Commissioners had exercised their powers under the provision referred to, and also to inquire into the effects of any asylums supported by voluntary subscriptions formed for the same purpose. They took a mass of evidence, but expressed no opinion on the question submitted to them. The evidence attributed the increase of vagrancy largely to the action of the Commissioners in issuing the circulars of 1837-9, which, it was urged, resulted in workhouse masters relieving all applicants whether deserving cases or not. The evidence was very strong as to the harmful effects of night asylums or shelters for the homeless in encouraging vagrancy. As a result of this inquiry, the scheme put forward by the Commissioners was abandoned.

28. In 1848, when the Poor Law Board took the place of the Poor Law Commissioners, the question of vagrancy was one of the first to be dealt with. In that year reports on vagrancy were made by the Inspectors to the new Board; and these reports were presented to Parliament together with a special report by Mr. Boase, and various communications from boards of guardians on the subject.\* These reports showed that in many cases the vagrant wards were defective: that the vagrants had greatly increased in numbers or were encouraged in idleness by the food and lodging provided for them: that their conduct was unruly and that little or no work was exacted from them; that their condition was often filthy and verminous, and many instances were given in which they spread fever and other diseases. The fact that vagrants refused to work or committed other offences for the express purpose of being sent to prison was referred to, and generally speaking the opinion of the Inspectors was that a closer connection between the Poor Law, the police, and the prison administration should be brought about, and that the treatment of vagrants should be uniform. Mr. Boase was in favour of transferring the vagrants entirely to the care of the police. One of the Inspectors, Mr. Aneurin Owen, recommended the establishment of what would be termed now "labour colonies," and suggested that islands off the coast, where rock is of proper hardness to be broken for road material, would be a suitable place for the establishment of these depots.

29. In consequence of these reports, a Minute of the Poor Law Board signed by Mr. Charles Buller, its first President, was communicated in the same year to boards of guardians and their officers calling attention to the necessity of repressing the growing evil of vagrancy, and the importance of exercising greater vigilance and discrimination in the administration of relief to vagrants. This Minute was popularly, though inaccurately, supposed to reverse to a considerable extent the policy of the Commissioners. In it complaint was made that all vagrants who applied for relief were admitted to the workhouse without discrimination, and it was stated that the responsibility rested with the guardians, who, "as they represent those who suffer from the evil, must seek the remedy principally in their own vigilance and energy. They can expect little help from Parliament when no material increase of their present power appears to be requisite." It went on to say that it was the duty of the officers "to relieve the destitute and to repel the impostor," and that the Board could not by general rules supply the place of that discrimination on the part of the

\* Reports and Communications on Vagrancy (1848).

guardians which was obviously necessary between the treatment of the professional vagrants and those really in distress. The professional vagrant was characterised as "the thief, the mendicant and the prostitute who crowd the vagrant wards." The Minute urged that there should be uniformity in action throughout England and recommended :—

- (a) the refusal of relief to able-bodied men not actually destitute ;
- (b) the employment of police officers as assistant relieving officers for vagrants ; and
- (c) some system of passes or certificates, to be given "by some proper authority" to persons actually in search of work. To lessen the chances of any abuse of those powers they should be granted only for a particular road and a limited period.

30. The recommendations of this Minute were very widely acted upon by boards of guardians (except it seems as to passes), and reports made by the Inspectors in 1849 showed that a great decrease in vagrancy had occurred as a result of more stringent regulations. The numbers of vagrants relieved fell from 13,714 on the 1st July, 1848, to 5,662 on the 1st July, 1849, and to 1,484 on the 1st July, 1853. From 1853, however, the numbers of vagrants began to rise again. The question of vagrancy seems to have been a source of continual trouble to the Poor Law Board, who issued several circulars which appear to have had but little effect in securing uniformity.

31. For some time previously complaints had been made that the cost of the relief of vagrants pressed unduly heavily on particular parishes. In the Gilbert incorporations\* this cost was already a common charge on the constituent parishes. In accordance with this precedent and in acknowledgment of the grievance complained of, the Poor Law Act of 1848 (11 & 12 Vict., ch. 110) made the cost a common charge in every union.

32. In 1857 the Poor Law Board revived the scheme which had been formulated by the Poor Law Commissioners in 1845 for the establishment of district asylums in the Metropolis, in which vagrants were to be treated in a uniform manner. The scheme, however, had again to be abandoned owing to the opposition with which it met. The Board argued in favour of the scheme that it was calculated :—

- (i) to ensure a better test of destitution by one uniform system of labour, discipline, and treatment, in return for relief ;
- (ii) to check vagrancy by diminishing the number of places for the reception of vagrants, and by establishing a system of supervision which would afford some ready method of detecting all second applications ;
- (iii) to relieve the workhouse from the dirt, annoyance, clamour, and contagion of habitual tramps, pickpockets, and prostitutes, so that the ordinary paupers, the majority of whom were aged and infirm persons, might be left undisturbed and the officers might not be interrupted in their proper functions ;
- (iv) to ensure a refuge for all who were really destitute and homeless, so arranged that the decent and well-conducted might find a night's shelter without being exposed to an intercourse with filthy and immoral inmates ; and
- (v) to apportion the charge of such relief more equally among the parishes and unions of the Metropolis.

33. Although this scheme failed, the Select Committee on Poor Relief of 1864 recommended that the relief of vagrancy in London should be a common

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\* Incorporations of parishes set up under Gilbert's Act (22 Geo. III., ch. 83).

charge on the whole Metropolis,\* and this led to the passing of the Houseless Poor Acts of 1864 and 1865, which are still partly in force. Under these two Acts the expenses in connection with vagrants were to be repaid to the guardians by the Metropolitan Board of Works, but in 1867 these expenses were made a charge on the Metropolitan Common Poor Fund. Under the Act of 1864 every London union was required to provide casual wards to the satisfaction of the Central Authority. In circular letters issued to London unions, the Poor Law Board specified certain requirements for casual wards, and suggested the use of sleeping platforms or barrack beds; they strongly recommended, but did not then prescribe, a task and a bath for each tramp; and they announced that they had made arrangements with the Commissioner of Police, by which officers of police would inspect the casual wards in London and make quarterly reports thereon to the Board. It may be mentioned here that, by an arrangement between the Poor Law Board and the Commissioner, the police were charged in 1863 to act as assistant relieving officers for vagrants in the Metropolitan unions and parishes. This practice lasted till 1872, when it came to an end by mutual consent, the police having made continual complaints of the duties imposed upon them, and of the filth and vermin brought to the police stations by applicants for relief. The various boards of guardians then appointed special officers as assistant relieving officers in place of the police, and four officers were appointed by the Local Government Board (who had succeeded the Poor Law Board in 1871) to supervise the casual wards and to make the quarterly reports which were required by the Act of 1865. This is still the practice in London.

34. In 1865 the Inspectors of the Poor Law Board were instructed to make reports upon the arrangements for dealing with vagrants within their respective districts. These reports were published in a volume and presented to Parliament in 1866†. They showed that great diversity in the treatment of tramps then existed. Of 619 unions 86 had no casual wards at all, and many others had quite unsuitable accommodation; while 195 imposed no task of work. It was clear that the policy of requiring masters of workhouses and relieving officers to exercise a discrimination in relieving vagrants, though it was generally adopted after the issue of the circular of 1848, was very soon abandoned by the guardians. The officers would not take the responsibility of refusing

\* The recommendations of the Committee on this point were as follow:—

"That, in order to secure sufficient and convenient means for the relief of the casual and houseless poor within the Metropolis, as defined by the Metropolitan Local Management Act, it is expedient that the charges incurred for the support of such poor should be paid out of a rate assessed, on the annual rateable value of the whole of the said Metropolis.

"That, in the opinion of this Committee, the machinery adopted under the Metropolitan Local Management Act might be made available for raising the amount of such charge, and your Committee recommend that authority be given to the Metropolitan board of works for such purpose.

"That the Poor Law Board be empowered to prescribe and enforce all necessary arrangements for providing the requisite accommodation in the several unions and parishes, and otherwise carrying the foregoing resolutions into effect.

"That, with the view of suppressing vagrancy as far as practicable, the Committee are of opinion that the Central Authority, when invested with adequate power for that purpose, should direct boards of guardians to provide suitable and sufficient wards for the reception of the wayfaring and wandering poor, and that the regulations for their management and relief should be on a uniform system throughout the country. The Committee approve of the employment of police constables as assistant relieving officers for vagrants, and think it desirable that the arrangement should be generally adopted."

† Reports on Vagrancy made to the President of the Poor Law Board by Poor Law Inspectors (1866).

relief to anybody, and in nearly every union reported upon relief was given to all applicants alike. There was no uniformity whatever, either in the diet given or in the task enforced, and several of the Inspectors pointed out the great difficulty of making masters take the trouble necessary for strictly enforcing the task which had been prescribed. It was considered by individual boards of guardians then, as it is now, both easier and less expensive to let the vagrant go without doing any task. The evidence as to the value of employing police officers as assistant relieving officers was conflicting, but it is clear that many boards of guardians after trying the system had abandoned it, either because the police, having no special responsibility in the matter, gave orders without enquiry, or because of the friction between them and the union officers. In one county only (Essex) did it appear that the system of passes or certificates suggested in Mr. Charles Buller's Minute of 1848 was being worked, and here Sir John Walsham reported that vagrancy had been practically abolished by the energy of Admiral McHardy, the chief constable.

35. The Inspectors reported that in many cases the vagrant wards were insufficient. Mr. Doyle, in a most interesting report, quoted largely from the opinions of workhouse masters and the police, and, in illustration of the character of the tramps, gave extracts from their writings on the walls of the vagrant wards. These extracts establish conclusively his statement that "the casual ward of a workhouse, so far from being the temporary refuge of deserving poor, is a place of rendezvous for thieves and prostitutes, and other vagabonds of the lowest class, gangs of whom work allotted districts and make their circuits with as much regularity as the judges." He recommended that if it was not possible to induce guardians to discriminate between the various classes of tramps, and to refuse admission to those who were able-bodied and not destitute, then the care of tramps should be handed over to the police, and that the vagrant wards should be utilised as refuges for wayfarers in search of work who had obtained passes to a definite place from the authorities.

36. Several of the other Inspectors considered that the treatment of vagrants was a matter for the police, and that the joint action of the police and poor law authorities could only result in friction. All agreed that uniformity was essential. One of the Inspectors, Mr. Cane, advised that vagrants refusing to work should not, except in extreme cases, be taken before a magistrate, but should be merely detained for four hours. He said that the main cause of refusal to work and of tearing up clothes was not infrequently a desire to be sent to prison for a short time. It may be remarked that the Inspectors were by no means unanimous as to the efficacy of any task of work partly on account of the difficulty of getting workhouse officers to enforce it, and partly because they were of opinion that, although a labour test was effective against a wayfarer in search of work, it broke down as against the professional vagrant.

37. In 1866 a dietary for vagrants was for the first time prescribed by the Central Authority, but the Order had reference only to London. It prescribed a uniform dietary. In 1868 the Poor Law Board issued a circular to guardians generally recommending the appointment of police as assistant relieving officers for vagrants and suggesting (a) that a register of applicants for admission should be kept; (b) that vagrants should be searched and bathed; (c) that they should be made to perform a task for not more than four hours; and (d) that a uniform dietary should be adopted. The circular commended the system of separate cells which had been introduced in a few places, and referred to a system of way-tickets adopted in certain counties, which dispensed with any task if a tramp had walked a sufficient distance from another workhouse, the walk being supposed to take the place of a task. It may be mentioned that the number of vagrants relieved fell from 7,020 on the 1st January, 1869, to 5,430 on the 1st January, 1870.

38. In 1871 the Pauper Inmates Discharge and Regulation Act was passed as a Government measure, dealing with the whole question of the discharge of

paupers from workhouses. In his speech introducing the Bill, Lord Kimberley referred to the proposal that the relief of vagrants should be entirely in the hands of the police, and intimated that though he thought this change might have great advantages he had decided against the proposal on the grounds that it might take the police from their other duties, and that it might involve considerable expense in the building of separate sets of wards in connection with police stations. The Act provided that a casual pauper should not be entitled to discharge himself from the casual ward before 11 a.m. on the day following his admission, nor before he had performed a prescribed task; and that, where a casual pauper had been admitted on more than two occasions during one month into any casual ward of the same union, he should not be entitled to discharge himself before 9 a.m. on the third day after his admission.

39. The detention of casuals over two nights made it necessary for the Local Government Board to prescribe a dietary for vagrants including a midday meal, a matter which has given rise to questions of great difficulty. A general Order was issued in November, 1871, prescribing a dietary (which is the same as that now in force) and tasks of work, and making general regulations as to the admission, discharge, and treatment of vagrants. The circular which was issued to guardians with the Order made various suggestions for dealing with vagrants. It stated that the Board would feel it their duty to require the provision of proper accommodation for vagrants, and it recommended generally the system of separate cells as being deterrent to the professional vagrant, and affording "protection from objectionable association to the honest but indigent wayfarer."

40. Immediately after the passing of the Act of 1871 the number of pauper vagrants began to decrease, and on the 1st January, 1875, it had fallen to 2,235, or about one-half of what it had been in 1866, and 3,000 less than it had been in 1870. But after 1875 the numbers began to rise again steadily until on 1st January, 1881, they amounted to 6,215. It may be noticed here that it appears to have been the experience that on most occasions when an Act has been passed, or an Order or circular issued by the Central Authority regulating the treatment of vagrants, the number of these persons has fallen, only, however, to rise again gradually until the next Act or Order.

41. In 1882 another Bill was introduced into Parliament to deal with vagrancy. In this Bill it was proposed *inter alia* to abolish the distinction between casual and ordinary paupers, to require that no pauper should be discharged from the workhouse without reasonable notice, and that no notice should be given before he had appeared before the guardians. The effect would have been that where the guardians met fortnightly a man might have to stop in the workhouse for a fortnight. These provisions were omitted during the passage of the Bill through Parliament, and the measure, limited to casual paupers, passed as the Casual Poor Act, 1882. It is still in force. It amended the Act of 1871 as to the discharge of casual paupers and extended the periods of detention. Under the Act of 1882, a casual pauper is not entitled to discharge himself from a casual ward before 9 a.m. on the second day following his admission (instead of 11 a.m. on the day following admission); and where he has been admitted on more than one occasion during one month into any casual ward of the same union, he is not entitled to discharge himself before 9 a.m. on the fourth day after admission (instead of 9 a.m. on the third day after admission). The Act also provides that for the purpose of determining the number of admissions of a casual pauper every casual ward in the Metropolis is to be deemed a casual ward of the same union. The Metropolis for the purpose of this Act is now the county of London (including the city of London). The effect is that if a person who has been admitted to a London casual ward subsequently goes to that or any other casual ward in London during the same month, he is liable to four nights' detention. To identify persons who have been admitted to any London wards more than once in a month, the four

officers appointed by the Local Government Board pay frequent visits to the different wards.

42. The Act was followed by a new general Order dated the 18th December 1882. This Order is set out in the Appendix. It provides *inter alia* that admission to the casual wards is to be only by an order of a relieving officer, assistant relieving officer, except in any case of sudden or urgent necessity. The admission is to be after 4 p.m. in winter and after 6 p.m. in summer. Vagrants are to be searched and have their money and all articles found upon them taken away; they are to have a bath; their clothing is to be dried and disinfected, and a nightshirt is to be supplied to them. An admission and discharge book is to be kept by the superintendent of the wards, which is to be a register of the vagrant's name, age, calling, previous sleeping place, task, and time of discharge. There is a proviso in the Order allowing the provisions of the Act as to detention to be dispensed with in particular cases, and this proviso has been one of the main causes of the want of uniformity in the administration of the Act and Order. In point of fact many boards of guardians make the exception the rule by not detaining any vagrant for two nights. The Order prescribes alternative forms of diet and task of work, and this again is an obstacle to uniformity of treatment. In 1887 a general Order was issued (applying to London only) requiring that either hot gruel or hot broth should be given for supper and breakfast in the case of males over fifteen.

43. In 1888 there was a Select Committee of the House of Lords on Poor Law Relief. Several witnesses of experience in poor law matters gave evidence in favour of the abolition of the casual wards but the Committee thought that "paupers belonging to the vagrant and casual class for various reasons" could not be dealt with otherwise than as a separate class, so that practically "it would always be necessary to maintain a separate department of the 'workhouse for their reception.'" They added: "It might, perhaps, be 'advisable in the case of casual paupers to somewhat further extend the 'power of detention, where the pauper has been re-admitted, say within 'a period of 14 days,' and they suggested that casual paupers should be allowed to discharge themselves before 9 a.m. In 1892 this last suggestion was given effect to by a general Order which conferred upon any casual pauper who represented that he wished to seek work, the right to claim his discharge on the second day after admission, at 5.30 a.m. in the summer and 6.30 a.m. in the winter, provided he had performed his task to the best of his ability. In 1897 another general Order was issued providing for an improved diet for children under the age of seven years by giving them milk.

44. From 1882 to 1885 the figures of pauper vagrancy decreased, but between 1885 and 1895 the number was nearly doubled according to the figures for the 1st January, and in the last-mentioned year a deputation representing 250 unions with a population of over 16,000,000 waited upon Mr. Shaw-Lefevre, President of the Local Government Board, asking for a Royal Commission or a Departmental Committee to inquire into the whole subject. This was refused, Mr. Shaw-Lefevre directing attention to the want of uniformity in the administration of the Act and Order of 1882, and saying that guardians should try the effect of carrying out the regulations before asking for fresh inquiry or legislation. A circular letter to this effect was issued in 1896. It pointed out that out of 648 unions 635 had casual wards, but that vagrants were detained for more than one night in only 305 unions. It stated that the regulations had been framed "with a view of ensuring "from the vagrants such a return by work for the relief afforded to them "by the guardians that they will understand that their lot whilst so relieved "will be in no wise better as regards labour than that of the industrious "working man," but "this intention is frustrated when from more than half the "casual wards in the country vagrants are discharged the first morning after "their admission generally without any adequate task of work being required,



"from them." Referring to the plea of certain boards of guardians that their accommodation was insufficient to enable them to detain for more than one night the large number of vagrants who sought admission, the Board pointed out that in the case of an habitual vagrant "it may usually be assumed that if he is not sleeping in one workhouse he is doing so in another, and therefore if all guardians detained vagrants of this class, the extra strain on the accommodation which is anticipated would not, under ordinary circumstances, arise." And they added that it had been proved again and again that "strict administration immediately produces a marked reduction in the number of applicants for admission." The circular concludes thus:—  
 "If it should hereafter be found that the existing law, when duly enforced by boards of guardians generally throughout the country, is insufficient to meet the evil, the Board will be quite ready to consider what further action should be taken with a view to dealing with the question either by legislation or otherwise."

45. This circular may have had a beneficial effect; at any rate pauper vagrancy decreased until 1900. But with the close of the South African War and the approach of a period of trade depression, the number of casual paupers again increased and in 1904 passed all previous records. The agitation against vagrants was renewed and fresh powers for dealing with them were sought. At last, in February, 1904, Mr. Long the President of the Local Government Board, received a joint deputation from the Central Poor Law Conference and the Poor Law Unions Association with the result that the present Committee were appointed to consider the whole question.

## APPENDIX II. THE LONDON SYSTEM.

In 1911 the casual wards of all the Boards of Guardians in London were placed under the management of the Metropolitan Asylums Board. These wards were put under the control of a special committee of the Board and were managed and supervised by officers who had no other poor law duties.

In 1912 a Committee known as the Metropolitan Homeless Poor Committee was set up by the President of the Local Government Board under the Chairmanship of the General Inspector for the Metropolitan District containing representatives of the Metropolitan Asylums Board, the Metropolitan and City Police, the London County Council, and most of the more important voluntary agencies affording relief to the homeless poor of London. This committee acting in an advisory capacity discussed the best means of co-operation between official and voluntary bodies concerned with the homeless poor.

The number of persons sleeping out on the Thames Embankment and in other parts of London had attracted much public attention and the Metropolitan Asylums Board in October, 1912, provided on the Embankment an office which was opened every night to which all homeless poor persons could be sent by the police or by voluntary workers. At this night office applicants were interviewed by experienced officers, who judged the needs of each and sent him to the institution best suited to his circumstances; men likely to take advantage of the restorative influences provided by voluntary bodies were sent to the appropriate body; those known to be habitual casuals were sent to casual wards.

In 1923 the Metropolitan Asylums Board converted one of their disused casual wards into a hostel to which men were sent who seemed likely to be able to obtain employment if they were given a chance to look for it and an address at which they could stay during the period in which they were making applications to employers. Suitable men were sent to this hostel from all London casual wards and were helped by the superintendent, in co-operation with the local employment exchanges, in their search for work. The following statement concerning the men admitted to the hostel during the three months September, October and November, 1929, has been supplied by the Metropolitan Asylums Board:—

ADMISSIONS.		DISCHARGES.	
From Casual Wards ...	536	To situations ...	200
Night Office... ..	42	To "Morning Post" Home	47
Re-admitted		Sent home or to relations	
from Infirmary ... ..	8	and friends ... ..	21
		Permitted to leave at own	
		request ... ..	43
		Failed to return from seek-	
		ing work ... ..	122
		Unsuccessful ... ..	59
		Unsuitable ... ..	19
		Unsatisfactory conduct ...	2
		Infirmary ... ..	20
		To Voluntary Agencies ...	43
		To draw unemployment	
		insurance ... ..	4
		Absconded ... ..	5
Total Admissions ... ..	586	Total Discharges ... ..	585
Remaining 31-8-'29 ...		61.	
Remaining 30-11-'29 ...		62.	

Young men who were likely to benefit by a course of training and were willing to undertake such a course were sent to the London Industrial Colony at Belmont, Surrey.

In addition a considerable number of elderly and infirm inmates of casual wards have been persuaded to settle as permanent inmates in suitable poor law institutions in London.

The Homeless Poor Committee still exists and its work is being continued, but under the operation of the Local Government Act, 1929, the Metropolitan Asylums Board has ceased to be and its functions have been taken over by the London County Council.

## APPENDIX III.

REPORT OF A SPECIAL INVESTIGATION MADE FOR THE  
DEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE BY Dr. E. O. LEWIS, INSPECTOR  
OF THE BOARD OF CONTROL.

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## SUMMARY OF RESULTS.

1. The incidences of abnormal mental conditions in the group of 592 casuals investigated were as follows: Feeble-mindedness, 18.7 per cent.; Insanity, 5.4 per cent.; Psychoneurosis, 5.7 per cent.

2. Forty-eight of the 93 feeble-minded casuals had ages less than 40. Twenty of the 32 insane cases were men and women suffering from senile dementia. Fifteen of the 34 casuals in a psychoneurotic condition belonged to the age group 40-49; and several of these had suffered from some form of war neurosis.

3. The distribution of the ages of all the casuals examined may be summarised as follows: Below 30 years, 13.8 per cent.; between 30 and 60, 66.6 per cent.; over 60, 19.6 per cent.

4. 81.9 per cent. of all the casuals were "habituals" and the remaining 18.1 per cent. were "non-habituals." It was estimated that approximately one-third of the "habituals" were not seeking work.

5. Classification of employment: 80.9 per cent. were unskilled and 15.5 per cent. were skilled workers. The remaining 3.6 per cent. had been employed on commercial and clerical work.

6. The nationalities of the casuals were as follows: English, 460; Scottish, 3; Irish, 73; Welsh, 27; Colonials and Foreigners, 9.

7. Large numbers of casuals had one or more physical defects. Diseases of the circulatory system, hernia, defective vision and hearing, and minor deformities were most common. No fewer than 75 casuals manifested signs of chronic alcoholism. Skin diseases were rare.

The mean heights and weights of the casuals approximated those of the general population. The nutritional condition of the majority compared favourably with that of the average person; but the feeble-minded and chronic alcoholics were markedly inferior.

No less than 80.2 per cent. of all the casuals were unmarried. Of the remaining 19.8 per cent. 5.1 per cent. were accompanied by their spouses, 6.7 per cent. were widowers or widows, and 5.9 per cent. had separated from their wives or husbands.

APPENDIX III.—*Continued.*

## REPORT.

*Introduction.*

Those who have a long and intimate experience of casuals recognise that the majority of these men and women have failed economically and socially. Such failure may obviously be due to many and varied causes and conditions. Thus physical infirmities of all kinds cause people to become dependent upon others, and of all infirmities those associated with senility are the most common. Epilepsy, chronic bronchial conditions, phthisis, cardiac disorders, and other chronic complaints incapacitate large numbers of persons and prevent them pursuing their occupations regularly; and in these days of keen competition and much unemployment those suffering from these complaints are at a great disadvantage. Mental infirmity also accounts for a certain proportion of social and economic failures. In many cases the mind ages sooner than the body, and although a man has the necessary physical energy, he may have lost the capacity to apply himself even to simple tasks of unskilled labour, and therefore becomes unemployed. Then again, there are men and women who have never had the minimum of mental endowments necessary for the earning of a livelihood even in the humblest rank or for living harmoniously in the general community; and these we regard as feeble-minded. There are many other persons who, though poorly endowed intellectually, are not of such a low grade that they can be classed as mentally defective on this ground alone, but are so unstable temperamentally that they fail even more conspicuously to hold their own and to fend for themselves than others of lower intellectual capacity but of greater stability. The behaviour of many of the temperamentally defective is so troublesome that social workers frequently bring pressure upon the Local Authorities to deal with them under the Mental Deficiency Acts, and to segregate them in institutions.

Another group which we fear, not without some reason, is becoming larger, consists of persons who, though endowed with normal intellectual capacities, manifest in a marked degree a lack of mental balance. The mental conditions of persons in this group may range from a mild form of psychoneurosis—hysteria, neurasthenia, or obsessions to the more serious forms of insanity—mania, melancholia, or paranoia.

There is a type of socially inefficient person which the lay mind is reluctant to include in any of the categories already mentioned; that of persons of pronounced anti-social behaviour. When science has made more progress in the study of human nature much anti-social behaviour will doubtless be seen to be due to some form of mental abnormality. For the present, however, we had better regard those manifesting anti-social behaviour as a separate category. This category will include large numbers of habitual criminals or recidivists who, because they persistently refuse to conform to the more rational conventions of their social group, are ostracised; and sooner or later they join the ranks of the social and economic failures.

The causes of social inefficiency which we have so far enumerated are factors inherent in the individual. Obviously the cause in a considerable proportion of cases is to be sought not in the individual, but in the environment. Man in adversity may be the victim and not the culprit. Adverse circumstances may be so overwhelming that even a person of exceptional ability and character is thrust into the ranks of the social failures. The environmental conditions which may thus break even the strongest of human material are so many and so diverse that we shall not attempt to enumerate them. It is possible and even probable that social failure, though primarily due to some inherent weakness of the individual, is aggravated by adverse extrinsic factors; poor endowment and unfavourable environmental conditions often form a

vicious circle. The great part played by environment in all social problems makes it imperative that anyone who wishes to study human failure should have an intimate knowledge of the difficulties the poor have to overcome if they are to steer clear of economic and social disaster.

Even if it be accepted that the problem of vagrancy is largely one of social inefficiency, there is a further problem to solve. Why have these socially inefficient persons taken to a life of vagrancy? The large majority of those who fail socially do not resort to a nomadic life. It is probably true that the less efficient members of any community migrate more frequently than the normal members, but most of them are able to make a home more or less continuously. Factors other than social inefficiency must therefore determine the vagrant habit; and in the course of our investigation we endeavoured to obtain some evidence of the more direct and immediate causes of vagrancy.

#### *The Investigation of Abnormal Mental Conditions.*

Our chief aim was to ascertain the proportion of casualties that could be classed as persons of abnormal mentality. If abnormality be interpreted as including all kinds and grades of variations from the normal the classification becomes meaningless for all scientific and practical purposes. In this investigation we were chiefly interested in two forms of mental abnormality—mental deficiency and insanity.

#### *A. Criteria and Standards.*

The interpretation of statistics relating to the incidence of mental defect and insanity naturally depends to a great extent upon the criteria and standards adopted in diagnosing these conditions. We do not think it necessary in this report to attempt a detailed description of our criteria and standards. It will be found when we come to discuss the statistical data that a much larger proportion of these casualties were mentally defective rather than insane, and for this reason the criteria and standards of mental deficiency are of a relatively greater importance in the discussion of our present problem. Those adopted in this investigation were the same as the standards and criteria agreed upon for the investigation we made recently for the Mental Deficiency Committee; and the reader who wishes fuller information will find a detailed description in the Report of the Mental Deficiency Committee\* (Part IV, Chapter 2).

The criteria of insanity are less arbitrary than those of mental deficiency. The behaviour and responses of a psychotic patient differ more definitely than do those of a feeble-minded person from those of a normal person. The circumstances in which our examination had to be made were such that only those whose mental state was clearly psychotic were classified as insane. The few thus classified manifested delusions, pronounced incoherence or disorientation, marked dementia, or some other well recognised sign or symptom of insanity; and in each case we sought contributory evidence from the attendant of the casual ward concerning the behaviour of the afflicted vagrant. There were several other casualties whose behaviour indicated mental disorder in a mild form, but in the course of our examination we were not able to obtain sufficient evidence to classify them as insane. Had we been able to observe them for a longer period we should doubtless have been able to get conclusive evidence of a psychotic condition. These borderline cases we decided to group with the psychoneurotic.

#### *B. Procedure.*

The Departmental Committee decided that it was desirable to examine about six hundred casualties to ascertain, in the first place, what proportion manifested mental abnormality of one kind or another. The returns from all the poor law authorities in England and Wales show that, on an average, there are about twelve thousand casualties relieved on any one night. It was thought that if six hundred of these were examined the data would be sufficient to

\* Published by H.M. Stationery Office.

form a basis for a tolerably accurate estimate of the total number of mentally abnormal casuals in England and Wales. The number actually examined was 592, that is approximately 4.9 per cent. of the average number relieved on any one night.

A selection was made of those wards which were likely to contain a fairly representative group of casuals. Only a few wards in the Metropolitan area were included in this list because these are frequented by men and women who are not typical of the casual class as a whole, since many of them live more or less continuously in the London area, and seek admission only occasionally when they are unable to find the few coppers necessary for a bed in a common lodging house. Another consideration that partly determined the selection of the casual wards was the view held by some persons who have a wide experience of casuals that there are among them urban and rural types. Therefore about an equal number of casual wards in industrial centres and in agricultural areas was visited.

In the majority of the casual wards comparatively few women were found, and accordingly it was decided to include Southwark Casual Ward where special arrangements are made for the reception of women vagrants in the London County area.

The names of the casual wards which were visited are given in Table I; the numbers of casuals seen at each ward are also given. It is necessary to explain that these figures do not indicate the total number of inmates of the casual wards on the night previous to our visit. Those who had been detained the whole of the day preceding our visit were, in most cases, allowed to leave early in the morning before we arrived. Had they been detained for our examination the casuals could not that day have reached the next casual ward on the road which they happened to be travelling and had they remained a second day there would have been no accommodation for those arriving that evening. For this reason the numbers in some wards were less than we expected with the result that we had to visit a larger number of wards than we had intended when we made our first arrangements for this investigation.

We communicated with the masters of the various Poor Law Institutions informing them of the date of our visit, enclosing a number of copies of the Preliminary Report (Form A)\* which the masters were asked to have completed by the time we arrived. The information given on these forms helped us materially in our examination of the casuals. In each ward a room was placed at our disposal where we examined each casual separately.

We realised at the outset the importance of approaching these men and women tactfully. The interview always began with a reference to some item of information on the preliminary report. This informal talk enabled us to detect any signs of mental abnormality. If the casual seemed normal we made a rapid physical examination of the chest and one or two inquiries concerning his general health, and then dismissed him. These physical examinations did much to win for us the casuals' confidence and helped to allay any suspicions they may have had. Human nature is such that if a doctor makes even the most cursory physical examination his action is interpreted as genuine professional solicitude, whereas a painstaking mental examination is often regarded as a personal affront.

If the preliminary talk indicated that a casual was suffering from some abnormal mental condition, a more detailed examination was made. Our data show that the most common abnormal condition in this group of casuals was that of low intelligence. It is obviously essential, if a reliable opinion is to be formed of the intelligence of those who frequent casual wards, to avoid the error of applying artificial academic standards. One of the first principles in the assessment of intelligence is that the tests applied should refer to the "universe of interests" of the individual who is being examined. His interests may be so limited that it would be more appropriate to speak of his "parish" and not of his "universe" of interests. But a narrow and limited

\*See page 96.



field of interests does not of itself prove a person to be of subnormal intelligence. Many of the casuals whom we saw were navvies engaged on "public works." It would have been waste of time to apply to these men some of the tests in the Scale of Intelligence in current use; and to base an opinion concerning their mental capacities upon their failure to give correct responses to these tests would be puerile. Several of the navvies were illiterate, but when we discussed matters that concerned them intimately, e.g., rates of pay, hours of work, and the practical difficulties of their work, we were soon convinced that they had the intelligence necessary to enable them to fend for themselves in their social group.

The impossibility of applying a large number of standardised tests made it all the more necessary to exercise caution in classifying a casual as mentally defective. If we erred, and we doubtless did, it was in adopting standards that did not permit of the inclusion of some who were mentally defective in that class; we felt that the data we were able to secure in the limited time at our disposal were not sufficiently conclusive to justify a definite pronouncement. Were it possible to transfer the casuals whom we classed as mentally defective to one of our large colonies for defectives, we believe it would be found that they were placed in their proper social setting so far as mental capacities were concerned. Indeed many of the higher grade feeble minded at present in these colonies would with some justification regard themselves as superior to the large majority of the newcomers.

The casuals who suffered from psychotic conditions manifested such definite signs and symptoms that little difficulty was experienced in making the diagnosis. Most of them were cases of senile dementia and these were easily recognised. There were only a few casuals who had delusions and these they expressed freely. We found only two cases of dementia præcox, both comparatively young persons. There were several others, however, who showed signs of the more chronic and mild forms of primary dementia. The diagnosis of manic-depressive conditions presented greater difficulty; there was only one man whose maniacal condition could be said to be acute, but there were several milder cases.

We were surprised to find so many casuals with marked features of psychoneurosis, and our experience in this investigation indicates that a mental therapist would find among vagrants interesting material for study and treatment. The elucidation of a psychoneurotic condition requires much time and special skill, and we do not claim to have made a thorough examination of this type of case in the present inquiry. We had to be content with getting sufficient evidence to convince ourselves that a particular casual suffered from one form or other of psychoneurosis. The psychoneurotic conditions most frequently encountered in this group of casuals were those of anxiety, neurasthenia, and hysteria. We cannot recall seeing a single case with an obsessive or compulsive condition, although the repetition of petty crimes for which some of the casuals had been frequently convicted may possibly have been due to an obsession.

#### *Other General Conditions Investigated.*

Although our attention was primarily directed to the examination of casuals manifesting mental abnormalities, at the same time we attempted to obtain some information of a general character concerning the whole group. The headings on Form A\* indicate the information we sought. All who have had dealings with casuals realise the difficulty of securing reliable information from them. Even their surnames, for reasons best known to themselves, are variable entities, and some casuals ring the changes on quite a wide selection. Many of the casuals whom we saw, more especially the older men and women, also betrayed uncertainty and ignorance concerning their age.

Questions relating to their last permanent abode were resented by several of the casuals. Many of them have what might be called an "anti-location"

\* See p. 96.

complex. The term "permanent abode" is ambiguous. For instance, if a vagrant had resided a few months in a locality before again taking to the road, should this have been regarded as his last "permanent abode?" In many cases we decided that it should, although obviously this interpretation is not satisfactory.

The classification into "habitual" and "non-habitual" casuals again depends largely upon the interpretation of these terms. If the records kept in the ward showed that the casual had been admitted on several occasions during a period of one year or more we regarded this as sufficient evidence for classifying him as a "habitual." The vagrancy in many cases, however, is simply periodic; a man settles down in a town or country district for several months at a time, and resumes his itinerancy only when he is unemployed. In the large towns many of these men and women spend most of their time in a common lodging house or hostel which to all intents and purposes can be regarded as their permanent home. They seek admission to the casual ward only when they have no means of paying for a bed elsewhere. In the category of the "non-habitual" are included all those who we were convinced had taken to the road for the first time in recent months and who may settle down as soon as they secure employment.

Under the heading of "employment" we sought information concerning the occupation which the casual had followed for the longest period; whether he had been trained for some profession or skilled trade, or had spent most of his life in doing unskilled labour of some kind. In the majority of cases we believe we obtained this information, but in some instances the information related to the last occupation and this was only some work of a temporary nature.

We are not inclined to place much reliance upon what the casuals told us concerning their wages. Probably the figures we received exaggerate the amount. Several of the vagrants, when further questioned, admitted that the figures they had given indicated their highest wages, and these had been earned for a comparatively short period only.

Many showed some reluctance to tell us about their family history, and doubtless the information we have is in many cases misleading. Even allowing for this we think the information obtained, especially that relating to their marital status, is significant and interesting.

The chief item of additional information which we sought was the height and weight of each casual. These two measurements are to some degree an index of the individual's nutritional condition. Unfortunately it was not possible to secure a weighing-machine in all the casual wards, and therefore our data are incomplete. The heights and weights of 358 men were obtained, and these form a fairly representative sample of the whole group of casuals which we examined. It must be admitted that the methods of measurement and weighing were rather crude, for the height was taken with the casual standing in his boots, and the weight included that of the clothes. We obtained some idea of the allowance that should be made for the weight of the clothes by weighing separately those worn by a few of the casuals. It is obvious, however, that any conclusions made from these data must be of a general character.

#### 4. Results.

##### A. *Abnormal Mental Conditions.*

##### (i) *Mental Deficiency.*

In this group of 592 casuals there were 93 mental defectives, that is an incidence of approximately 15.7 per cent. (Table I). When this incidence is applied to the total number of casuals on any one night, approximately, 12,000, we estimate that there are nightly about 1,800 mental defectives in casual wards in England and Wales.

All the defectives among the casuals were of the feeble-minded grade: we saw in the wards no lower grade defectives, i.e., imbeciles or idiots. Though

the lowest type of vagrant life does not require much intelligence, there is a minimum below which it becomes impossible. The casual with the lowest intelligence in the group examined had a mental age of approximately seven, but the majority of the mentally defective casuals had mental ages of about eight or nine. A few—about half a dozen—had higher mental ages, but these manifested such marked temperamental instability that they were obviously incapable of fending for themselves and were in need of care and control.

The educational attainments of these defectives were very low. The test\* we used for the detection of defective vision also served the purpose of ascertaining the reading capability. Very few of the defective casuals were able to read such words as, "shelves," "twisted," "belief," "serious," and these words present but little difficulty to a normal eight-year-old child. An approximate estimate of the casual's capacity for manipulating numbers was made by discussing simple calculations relating to the wages he had earned. The exigencies of the daily life of even an unskilled labourer demand that he should be able to make simple calculations of money values; but a considerable number of these feeble-minded casuals were unable to give correct answers to such questions as would have presented little difficulty to the majority of children of the age of eight.

Not much importance, however, can be attached to educational attainments in diagnosing mental defect, especially when examining unskilled labourers. Irregular attendance at school during childhood, or inadequate educational facilities, may in many cases account for poor educational attainments. The educational attainments of a considerable number of the casuals who were not classed as mentally defective were no higher than those of the feeble-minded.

In the examination of adults more importance must be attached to qualitative criteria than to quantitative standards; and in the present investigation our judgment was based chiefly upon certain responses characteristic of the mentally defective. Most feeble-minded persons manifest childishness and simplicity in their general conversation, and these features are readily recognised by those familiar with defectives. Other diagnostic features of the mentally defective are inability to concentrate, lack of initiative and persistence, failure to apply what little knowledge has been acquired, inability to comprehend an easy syllogistic argument or to detect obvious absurdities, failure to plan simple tasks, and general lack of foresight.

The behaviour of several of these feeble-minded casuals showed that they had some insight into their own inferiority. This was revealed by the way some of them attached themselves to other vagrants of better intelligence. A rather low grade feeble-minded man of Welsh nationality gave as his surname that of another casual whom we had seen at the same ward. This led us to ask him if they were relatives, and he replied immediately that they were cousins. The other, who was fairly intelligent and whose testimony seemed reliable, said that he had first seen the defective the previous day when on his way to this casual ward. He added that he had soon realised that the other man was simple-minded. He was obviously surprised and rather amused when we told him that the feeble-minded casual claimed kinship with him. When asked if he intended taking his fellow countryman along with him when he set out on his next day's journey, he replied that he did not wish to undertake the responsibility.

There are, doubtless, some instances in which the feeble-minded man is helped materially by these casual friendships, although the solicitude and concern of the normal casual is often manifested in a crude manner. There must be other cases where the attachment is definitely detrimental to the defective, as for instance when a feeble-minded person comes under the influence of an unscrupulous vagrant. We saw in one of the casual wards a feeble-minded woman who, when asked if she were married, replied "Not yet";

\* Burt's Handbook of Tests; Reading (Accuracy) Test.

and added that in the course of the next year she intended marrying the man with whom she was at the time travelling from one ward to another. We interviewed the man a little later. He was decidedly more intelligent than the woman, but his moral standards were low. When asked whether he was married he said "Yes," and on being asked "How long?" he replied "Two years." We pressed him on the point and he impatiently re-affirmed it. We then told him what his woman companion had said. His reply was "She doesn't know," and at the same time winked and pointed his finger to his head to indicate that the woman was simpleminded.

We shall discuss at a later stage the physique, cleanliness and clothing of the whole group of casuals, but we may appropriately make a few observations here concerning the condition of the feeble-minded in these respects. Most of them were definitely subnormal in physique. Their poor nutritive condition indicated their inability to provide adequately for even their most fundamental needs. Although few casuals seen in these wards could be said to be emaciated, there were several whose nutritive condition was definitely below the average, and most of these were feeble-minded. The malnutrition in many cases was associated with anemia and a general state of lassitude.

With few exceptions the feeble-minded were poorly clothed, and as a group they contrasted sharply with the normal casuals. The special attention given to the cleansing of garments in casual wards ensures that these are free from vermin, but even so the clothes of the defectives were very dirty and much torn. The vagrant of normal intelligence attaches much importance to the proper care of his feet; he endeavours to secure suitable and well-fitting boots or shoes, and takes many precautions to prevent sores. Most of the defectives whom we saw in this investigation obviously had not sufficient intelligence to take care of themselves in this way; and sores on their feet caused them considerable discomfort and pain.

The incidence of mental defect is higher among the female than the male casuals whom we examined, but in view of the small number of women we do not attach much importance to this disparity. The incidence of mental defect among the males was 15.1 per cent. and among the females 22 per cent. This difference confirms our opinion that the women as a group were mentally inferior to the men. Several of the women accompanied men who might or might not have been their husbands; and these women manifested a docility characteristic of the feeble-minded. When questioned about their future plans they admitted they had none, but were prepared to tramp from one ward to another indefinitely with their husbands or male companions. Some of these feeble-minded women suffered from severe physical disabilities, *e.g.*, cardiac disease, varicose veins; and although these disabilities rendered them unfit for the physical strain which a vagrant life inevitably involves, they managed somehow to struggle along.

So far we have discussed only those casuals whose mental capacities were so poor that they could be classified as mentally defective. What was the level of intelligence of the other casuals who did not belong to this category? It is scarcely necessary to state that our answer to this question is based not upon statistical data, but merely on a general impression obtained during the cursory examination of these normal casuals. The opinion we formed of their mental capacities was that they were definitely subnormal. With regard to intellectual attainments the relation of these casuals to the community as a whole seems analogous to that of retarded children to the rest of the school population. Considerable numbers of this group of normal-casuals volunteered the information that they were "no scholars." No matter what standards or tests of intellectual attainments were applied, we believe a considerable proportion, if not the majority of them would have been found to belong to the dull section of the community.

The line of demarcation between feeble-mindedness and dullness is an arbitrary one, and it is inevitable that the personal equation of the investigator should determine, in some measure, the number of persons placed in the category of the feeble-minded. When the much larger group of dull persons

is under consideration this personal equation is probably of relatively less importance. We believe there would be a consensus of opinion among investigators trained in assessing mental capacities that the casuals we examined, when regarded as a group, belonged to the subnormal section of the community. This generalisation does not imply that there were no men or women of normal intelligence among them; there were several, and there were some even of supernormal intelligence, but these formed a small minority.

This conclusion, if valid, is significant. Although the subnormal intelligence of these vagrants does not, of itself, afford a complete explanation of their social inefficiency, it is an important factor, and it should be borne in mind when any attempt is made to formulate proposals for the prevention or the amelioration of the social failure of such persons in the future. The records of many of those whom we saw indicate clearly that they were only capable of doing unskilled work, and even in this field of labour they were the least efficient. Even during periods when there was much demand for unskilled labour many of these casuals owing to their poor endowments, both intellectually and temperamentally, seem to have been incapable of retaining their situations for any length of time.

(ii) *Insanity.*

The number of insane casuals is, as we should expect, small, the total number being only thirty-two, that is 5.4 per cent. of the whole group we examined (Table I). There were only two cases who we thought should have been sent to a mental hospital. One was an excitable, maniacal patient, and the other, a young man suffering from dementia praecox. All the other insane cases naturally required care and some measure of control, but their conditions were so mild that they could be dealt with satisfactorily in poor law institutions.

No fewer than 20 of the 32 insane casuals were cases of senile dementia. Their mental deterioration was so marked that they were incapable of ensuring for themselves the minimum comfort. Some of these were the saddest cases we examined, and each one suffered considerable hardship by being a vagrant. The complaints made by some of these senile patients—which, as far as we were able to ascertain, were quite unjustified—were of the nature of mild delusions of persecution; and in a few cases there were other features which indicated the possibility of a condition of paranoia. The other casuals manifesting psychotic conditions can be classified as follows:—dementia praecox—2; manic-depressive—4; toxic psychosis—3; paranoia—3.

It is very probable that some psychotic cases in this group of casuals were not detected. The heading "Hospitals and Institutions" on Form A was included partly with a view to ascertaining whether the casual had at any time been a patient at a mental hospital. Only in four cases was such information obtained; and each of these appeared to have made a good recovery. We saw a few men who manifested some of the earlier signs of general paralysis, e.g., abnormal eye and tendon reflexes, slurring speech, facial tremors; but in the absence of serological tests a definite diagnosis could not be made.

(iii) *Psychoneurosis.*

An unexpected and surprising feature of our investigation was the frequency with which we encountered casuals who manifested very definitely the signs and symptoms associated with some form of psychoneurosis. There were no fewer than thirty-four who suffered from some form of neurosis (Table I). There were others about whose condition we felt doubtful, and had there been time and facilities for a more thorough examination we should probably have formed the opinion that some of these also were psychoneurotic. One of the chief things we discovered in this investigation was that here was a field awaiting investigation, restricted it is true, but of the greatest interest to the student of mental conflicts and maladaptations. Several of these casuals, more especially the young men, reminded us of the "shell-shock" victims of the Great War. In fact, some of the casuals volunteered the inform-

ation that they had suffered from some form of war neurosis, and it was obvious that they had not made a complete recovery.

A snapshot diagnosis made after a superficial examination is often very wide of the mark and this is especially the case in the field of psychoneurosis. We shall, therefore, make no attempt to sub-classify the psychoneurotic casualties we saw in the course of the investigation, and shall be content with a general description of some of the types we encountered.

A state of anxiety was the commonest form of psychoneurosis. There is little doubt that in several cases the chief cause of anxiety was the failure to secure suitable and permanent employment; several of the men told us that their worried state had made it impossible for them to keep a situation even when one had been secured. The speech and general demeanour of a few of the men in this group indicated that they had come from good homes. They had been trained for work or placed in situations which necessitated mental capacities and personal qualities they did not possess. Failure was inevitable; after a series of failures they had lost all confidence in themselves and had taken to a life of vagrancy.

Talks with the younger men who had not been long on the road convinced us that vagrancy in its initial stages may be regarded in some cases as a reaction of flight from an uncongenial situation or environment. The reason given by several young men for their vagrancy was that they had been intensely unhappy at home and had left in a moment of impulse. In such cases, vagrancy seemed to be a state of aimless wandering characteristic of a person's behaviour when he is much more concerned in escaping from a particular place than in reaching any definite destination. These young men had no plans for the future, and at the moment they were making no effort to find work and to settle down. Several of these psychoneurotic casualties, when they discussed their personal affairs, showed signs of considerable mental disturbance. Strong emotions were evinced; some expressed much bitterness at the injustice or ill-treatment, real or imaginary, they had suffered; others expressed excessive remorse, while a few were on the border-line of an acute state of insanity.

The flight in some cases we had reason to believe was more purposeful. Some of the younger men were very timid and nervous when interviewed, and answered our questions reluctantly; their answers, when given, were brief and evasive. A man about thirty-five years of age, for example, shortly before he came to the room to be examined admitted to the ward-attendant that the name he had given when asked for the information necessary to fill Form A was incorrect, and then volunteered his correct name. When we saw him his attitude was a blend of fear, docility and suspicion. He answered our questions in a low voice and as briefly as possible. At first he was by no means aggressive, but obviously very anxious to have the interview over quickly. One of our last questions to this man related to his permanent abode, and it was only after some hesitation he replied. The ward-attendant was familiar with the place mentioned and casually referred to a tragic incident that occurred there many years ago. The casual, whose demeanour up to this moment had been quiet and subdued, suddenly became very agitated and aggressive, and exclaimed excitedly some remark to the effect that there were murderers of other nationalities besides his own. We felt that no good purpose would be served by pursuing this topic further at the moment, but we resolved to have a quiet talk with him later. In this we were disappointed, for as soon as this man left the room, although he was told to go to another ward at the other side of the airing-court, he made for a door which led to the street and disappeared.

Several neurotic cases of the psychasthenic type were found in this group. The mental processes of these particular men were so sluggish and so markedly inhibited that a special effort seemed to be required from them to answer even the simple questions we asked. They also manifested the characteristic impersonal attitude of this type of case. They seemed disheartened and indifferent to their lot, to have abandoned themselves to a life of drifting

aimlessly from one place to another, and to have become incapable of any effort to rehabilitate themselves in the life of the general community.

Comparatively few manifested signs of hysteria, and these few, with one or two exceptions, were women. Almost every hysterical female casual showed signs also of chronic alcoholism, and it was difficult to say whether the hysterical condition was due to congenital emotional instability, or to alcoholic habits.

We noted with much interest that stammering was a common defect among the casuals, and in many cases it was severe. This speech defect is often associated with a psychoneurotic condition; and this we judged to be the case with several casuals.

Table IIa. gives the number of cases in which a condition of amentia was complicated by some other form of mental disease. It is of some interest to note that in the whole group of casuals there were only two who suffered from epilepsy. The numbers in this table are all so small that no special comment is necessary.

In the preceding notes we have endeavoured to give a brief description of some of the chief types of abnormal mental conditions which we saw in the course of our inquiry. Many who did not belong to any of these categories also presented interesting psychological problems. Several young men who obviously had been nurtured in good homes, but had by their impulsive and wilful behaviour exhausted the affection and solicitude of their parents, alienated their friends, and broken away from all the ties of their social group, presented studies of the greatest interest to the psychologist.

The chief conclusion of a practical nature indicated by our observations and experiences in this inquiry is that there is a need for the periodical medical examination of all casuals. The doctors who undertake these examinations should have special knowledge of and be keenly interested in psychiatry and kindred studies. These medical examinations would probably result in the adoption of preventive and ameliorative measures which would in time reduce the number of casuals, and alleviate the physical hardships of those who, through force of circumstances, have to resort temporarily to an itinerant life, and render timely therapeutical treatment in cases of incipient mental disease.

#### *B. Age Distribution of the Casuals.*

Table III gives the distribution of ages. It will be seen that about 66 per cent. of the casuals were between 30 and 60 years of age. The proportion in the 20—29 age group is definitely smaller than that in the 30—39 age group, whereas those in the 40—49 and 50—59 are much the same. The figures in this table indicate that although more than 12 per cent. of the casuals start their life of vagrancy in the twenties, their number is materially increased by those who begin this life when they have reached the thirties.

As much as 15 per cent. of the group of male casuals consisted of young men under thirty years of age. There were, however, only twelve lads under twenty-one, and it is significant that no fewer than six of these were feeble-minded, two were psychoneurotic, and not one of the remaining four could be said to have average intelligence. If the after-care work of our educational system were done thoroughly in the areas from which these lads came, they would probably have been saved from drifting into a life of vagrancy.

An attempt was made to discover in each case why the young men had resorted to casual wards. The explanation often seemed to be that there were no strong ties or associations, such as those of the family, to keep them settled in any one place. Many stated that they had been orphans from an early age and during their childhood had lived with grandparents or other elderly guardians. When these died a period was spent in lodgings, but this was not long especially if they became unemployed. A few of these young men had spent their childhood in cottage homes maintained by the poor law authority, charitable homes, industrial or reformatory schools. When they left these homes or schools they had been placed in situations, mostly on farms; but

for some reason, most often on account of their inefficiency, they had been unable to retain these situations. Sooner or later they had escaped from the supervision of the authority that had taken care of them, and, being unable to fend for themselves, they had spent most of the time subsequently in tramping from one casual ward to another.

Several of the young casuals admitted that they had left their homes voluntarily owing to domestic trouble. The conflict in not a few cases was with a step-parent, step-brother or step-sister. Unhappy family relationships undoubtedly were the causes of many of these casuals embarking upon a life of vagrancy.

Other young casuals had been convicted of crime; twenty of them admitted this. The offences were mostly of a minor character, such as haggling, or drunkenness; but a few had been convicted—some more than on one occasion—of serious crimes such as burglary, assault, or theft. We suspected several other young men of belonging to this more dangerous criminal class. Some of these by some casual remark unwittingly aroused our suspicions. One young man said he was a groom, but when some minutes later in the interview we returned to the subject of his employment and asked if he had done any horse-breaking, he replied in a somewhat unconvincing manner, "Oh no! I have not done any house-breaking." Another young vagrant suffering from valvular heart disease when asked if he had recently experienced giddiness, became rather expansive and said he had noticed that he was not as steady on window-sills as formerly. Surprised at his remark we asked him why he, being a weaver, found it necessary to be on window-sills. He was obviously embarrassed by the question.

Had not the poor law authorities in some of the districts which we visited encouraged in recent years a number of older vagrants to become permanent inmates of their Institutions, the proportions of older age groups would doubtless have been definitely higher. Even so, nearly 20 per cent. of those we saw in these casual wards were over sixty years of age; and with few exceptions these showed definite signs of senility. We observed in one case after another that the men and women seemed to have aged prematurely; this was occasionally so striking that we thought they could not have known their age even approximately. Comparatively few of these aged casuals were fit either physically or mentally to endure the hardships of a life of vagrancy. Fourteen of them were over seventy years of age. The mental condition of twenty of the casuals had deteriorated so markedly that the diagnosis of senile dementia was justified.

The ages of the women ranged from thirty to seventy. It is gratifying to note that not even one woman under thirty years of age was seen in the casual wards; and only about one-third of the women were of the child-bearing age.

Table IV. gives the age distribution of the casuals who were mentally abnormal. Approximately one half of the feeble-minded were under forty years of age. The largest number of psychoneurotic cases is found in the age group 40-49; several of the men in this group had suffered from war neurosis, and although ten or more years had elapsed since the onset of their neurotic condition they had not yet recovered. Nearly one-half of the insane group is comprised of casuals over 65 years of age. The data in this table may therefore be summarised thus—the mentally defective were young, the psychoneurotic were middle-aged, and the psychotic were aged casuals.

### C. *Employment.*

The information concerning the type of work done by these casuals for the longest period was often indefinite and probably inaccurate. It is inadvisable, therefore, to attach much importance to some of the figures given in Table V. These figures, however, probably give a general idea of the relative number who had spent most of their lives in unskilled or skilled work, or in commercial situations. No fewer than 438 of 542 men, that is approximately 80 per cent., were unskilled labourers; 15 per cent. had, at one time, been engaged in some



form of skilled work; less than 5 per cent. had been engaged in clerical or commercial occupations.

About one-fourth of the group of unskilled labourers were men who had spent their lives on public works, mostly as navvies; and these impressed us as the best of this group. Their general bearing was that of straightforward, hardworking men. Most of them had their health insurance and employment cards and were obviously seeking work. They were fairly well-informed about the large schemes for public works that were in progress or being contemplated in different parts of the country. Many of them said that the policy of employing local labour in most municipal schemes had considerably increased their difficulty in getting employment. A good proportion lived most of their lives in the better class of common lodging house and resorted to casual wards only periodically when they were unable to secure work. They complained of the conditions in the poorer type of common lodging house, and expressed the opinion that they were considerably worse than those of most casual wards.

A fairly large group of unskilled workers was comprised of farm labourers, but these were a definitely poorer type of men from the standpoint of social efficiency than the "public works" navvy. A number of these farm labourers had casual work on the farms during the summer months, and some of them remained the greater part of the summer on the same farm.

The number who claimed to be skilled workmen was much smaller than we had anticipated. This group included carpenters, painters, bricklayers, motor-drivers, tailors, bakers, miners, etc.; but not many of these were habitual casuals. There were doubtless several in this group who were the victims of misfortune, but many of them left us with the impression that their skill in the trade which they claimed to follow was not of a high order. Several admitted that excessive drinking had caused their downfall and in not a few of these cases there were signs of chronic alcoholism.

For no single group is our information less accurate than for that of the men who had, at some time or other, been engaged in some clerical or commercial capacity. Most of these men, not unnaturally, were very reticent. The majority of this group were commercial men, and some of them had at one time their own business. Several of these men admitted that their failure was to be attributed to drink or gambling.

#### *D. Habitual and Non-habitual Casuals.*

It is difficult to set down any general rule for distinguishing the habitual from the non-habitual casual, and any line of demarcation must obviously be arbitrary. We adopted the suggestion that a man should be regarded as habitual if he had visited casual wards fairly frequently for a period exceeding one year. The casuals classed as "habituals" when this criterion was applied formed a composite group; it consisted of at least two different types. The one was the "nomad"; he was the type who had for many years spent almost the whole of his time in casual wards and had abandoned himself to a life of vagrancy, making no attempt to find even temporary employment, but was quite content if he had a little money for tobacco and drink, and occasionally to secure this did an odd job for a few hours. The other was the habitual whom we have designated the "chronic" type. He also had frequented casual wards more or less regularly for years, but he was seeking work and during certain periods of the year when he was employed would not be found in casual wards. He either settled temporarily in lodgings or, if engaged on farm work, "slept rough" in barns.

Of the 592 casuals we classed 485, approximately 82 per cent., as habituals; and the remaining 107, that is 18 per cent., as non-habituals (Table VI). About a third of the group of habituals were nomads; and the other two thirds were simply chronic habituals. A fair proportion of those at present in the non-habitual or temporary group will probably deteriorate and become habitual casuals, but there were doubtless several men who were using the casual wards for the first time and once they reached their destinations they would not be seen in the wards again.

### E. Nationality.

Table VII gives the number of vagrants of various nationalities. Only nine of the casuals were colonials or foreigners. There were 583 English, Scottish, Irish and Welsh. If this number be divided in proportion to the populations of these four countries we should expect to find 433 English, 60 Scottish, 54 Irish, and 36 Welsh. When these numbers are compared with those in Table VII it will be seen that the actual number of English casuals is higher and of Irish much higher than would be anticipated from the relative populations; whereas the Welsh numbers are lower, and the Scottish considerably lower. The high proportion of persons of Irish descent will not surprise those who are conversant with the problem of vagrancy. Many of these Irish casuals come to England during the spring and work in the fruit and hop districts of England during the summer and autumn months and return to Ireland for the winter. A fair proportion of the navvies or public works men were also Irishmen, but most of these remain in England throughout the year.

### F. Physical Defects.

We cannot claim to have made a thorough physical examination of each casual, and in the majority of cases we examined only the chest and any obvious physical abnormality. If a casual complained of any symptoms the condition indicated by these received special attention. The data given in Table VIII cannot, however be regarded as a complete record of the physical defects in this group.

There were 43 cases with marked symptoms and signs of disease of the circulatory system. Most of these had valvular defects of the heart; the compensation in some cases was obviously poor, as was shown by marked dyspnoea, cyanosis, and oedema. Several of the older casuals complained also of symptoms indicative of arterio-sclerosis.

The group of casuals as a whole was surprisingly free from respiratory diseases. Chronic bronchitis was the most common respiratory complaint. Several stated they were periodically subject to attacks of asthma. Only one definite case of advanced phthisis was found, but there were a few others with signs indicating a quiescent tubercular condition of the lungs.

In the category of genito-urinary diseases and abnormal conditions of annexed organs, there were 17 cases of hernia; with one or two exceptions, these casuals wore trusses, but several had been badly fitted. Six men had hydroceles and the distention was considerable in almost every case. Two had large pendulous varicoceles. Most of the men who had these abnormal conditions admitted that at one time or other they had been offered facilities for operation at a poor law infirmary, but they had refused the offer.

In this category we also included two cases of gonorrhoea and one with typical signs of congenital syphilis. A small number of other casuals had signs and symptoms indicative of syphilitic diseases, but these, in the absence of corroborating blood-tests could not be included as definite cases.

Although the dental condition of many casuals was very bad, comparatively few complained of digestive troubles. Five of the ten in category (4) had symptoms which indicated the presence of duodenal or gastric ulcers.

The large majority of the 86 casuals with eye diseases and defects had merely those defects of vision which are common amongst older adults; and a high incidence of hypermetropia is not surprising since almost 50 per cent. of all the casuals had ages over fifty. Most of these older casuals had glasses, but since many of these had been purchased for a nominal price or begged of persons who find satisfaction in indiscriminate charity, the lenses in most cases were obviously quite unsuitable. Blepharitis and simple chronic conjunctivitis were fairly frequent.

Twenty-two casuals were more or less deaf, which indicates a definitely higher incidence of this condition among casuals than among the general population. In several cases, however, the deafness was associated with

senility. Three of them were completely deaf, but none of these was mute. Several of the deaf casualties had chronic otorrhoea. Doubtless the deafness in some cases was a factor which contributed to their economic failure.

One of the most frequent conditions enumerated in Table VIII is that of chronic alcoholism; it was diagnosed in no fewer than 75 cases. There can be no doubt whatsoever that signs of chronic alcoholism were manifested quite definitely by a considerable number of these casualties. The most common signs were watery, icteroid conjunctiva, a red and thickened nose, acne rosacea, furred tongue, foetid breath, tremors of the tongue and hands, dilated venules on face and along the lower costal margin. The last-mentioned sign may appropriately be designated the "girdle of Bacchus," and many of the casualties presented striking examples of this. The nutritive condition of these alcoholics was definitely below normal, and a few of them could be said to be emaciated. There were also mental signs such as defective concentration, poor memory, indistinct articulation, characteristic affability and superficial emotionalism, to help us in our diagnosis. Most of those exhibiting these signs readily admitted that they had been heavy drinkers. During the last few decades the number of chronic alcoholics seems to have decreased in the general community, but our data indicate that they still constitute a large group among casualties.

The nutritional condition of the casualties will be discussed later, but we have indicated in Table VIII Category (8) the number of those who were definitely subnormal in this respect. There were twenty-eight cases of malnutrition; in most of these the defect was associated with chronic alcoholism or feeble-mindedness. The cachectic appearance of a few of the older men, associated, as it usually is, with much wasting of the bodily tissues, made us suspect the existence of malignant disease.

The next three categories in this Table—(9), (10), and (11), include chiefly defects of the lower limbs; and these are obviously of special interest because they prove a special handicap to the wayfarer. Fourteen of the 31 cases placed in Category (9) had varicose veins in the legs and these must have caused considerable pain and discomfort. The proportion of casualties suffering from this condition seems to be lower than that found among the general community, if we accept as a basis the returns of the examination of recruits for the Army during the Great War.\* The low incidence of this condition among casualties may be attributed to the fact that those who suffer from it cannot do the walking that is necessary, and are, sooner or later, forced to settle down in common lodging houses or institutions.

Nine of the 17 other cases included in Category (9) had sores on their feet, and these were caused in most instances by badly fitting boots or shoes. If all the casualties with some slight abrasion or blister had been counted the numbers would have been considerably higher. In each of the nine cases the sore had been treated at the casual ward and suitable dressing had been supplied; but the condition was so bad that the feet required complete rest for a few days to allow the sore to heal.

There were only ten cases of paralysis. Most of these were congenital hemiplegias, but none of them was severe. There were a few cases in which the paralysis was associated with marked spinal curvature.

The large majority of deformities included in Category (II) were of a trivial nature—rachitic deformities, slight war injuries, pigeon-chests, amputated fingers and toes, spinal curvatures, ankylosed joints, Dupuytren's contractions, and minor stigmata. Comparatively few of the defects in this category seriously hampered the casualties. One interesting negative observation we may note here was the small number of severe cases of osteo-arthritis; and this is all the more surprising since there was large proportion of old men and women. A few of these complained of "rheumatics," but an examination of the joints did not reveal any marked signs of osteo-arthritis.

\* Report of the Ministry of National Service 1917-1919, Vol. I, p. 141. Five per cent. of all recruits in Scotland suffered from varicose veins.

Category (12), relating to skin diseases, has been included simply because the number is so surprisingly small. Two of three cases had psoriasis, and the other scabies. Throughout the inquiry we took pains to examine for this last-mentioned condition, and the fact that only one case was found may be regarded as one proof of the bodily cleanliness of the casuals.

Isolated cases of other physical defects were noted, but we have not thought it necessary to record these in detail.

The general conclusion indicated by these records of physical defects is that a periodic routine examination of all casuals is most desirable. The present facilities which enable a casual to be medically examined if he so requests do not seem to be adequate. Many being persons of poor intelligence do not realise the seriousness of their physical defects. Moreover the fear that is common among them of being detained in a poor law institution deters them from seeking medical advice or treatment. The result is that their condition often deteriorates until they are compelled to remain permanently as patients in some infirmary, whereas if appropriate treatment were given at an earlier stage they would remain fit for work for several more years.

### *G. Heights and Weights.*

The heights and weights of 388 of the total number of 542 male vagrants were ascertained, and these are summarised in Table IX. Since the measurements were somewhat crude our data must again be interpreted with caution. The height recorded is that taken when the casual was wearing boots or shoes. A number of height measurements we have made of persons with and without boots indicate that if, on an average, an inch is deducted from the height in boots a fairly accurate measurement is obtained of the actual height. Thus if the record gave a man's height as 5' 6½" we, in tabulating, recorded this case in the height-group 5' 5"-6". Hutchinson's norms,\* which are also given in Table IX include the weight of the clothes and, therefore, no correction is necessary in respect of these.

The numbers of cases in the first three and in the last four height-groups are so small that their statistical validity is negligible. Our comments will, therefore, be based upon the mean weights for the height-groups 5' 2"-3" to 5' 8"-9".

For this group the mean weights are somewhat lower than for those of the corresponding norms with the exception of those for the height-group 5' 6"-7". The differences, however, are not large,—scarcely large enough to have any statistical significance. The slightly subnormal weight may be due to the fact that the average age of this group of casuals was definitely higher than that of the general population; a person's weight generally decreases after sixty. Moreover, as previously stated, there were many chronic alcoholics and feeble-minded among them, and the nutritional condition of these men was considerably below normal. When these facts are taken into consideration the nutritional condition of this group of casuals as far as this can be judged from the records of heights and weights was not materially inferior to that of the general population.

### *H. Clothing and Cleanliness.*

The general impression we received was that the casuals were fairly well clothed. Even many of the nomads seemed to be able to secure adequate clothing, and some of the women wore many more garments than were necessary. The only casuals whose clothing was unsatisfactory and often very inadequate were the feeble-minded. The standard of the footwear was not so high as that of the clothing; large numbers of the casuals found it necessary to slit the vamp in order to walk with comfort.

\* "On the Capacity of the Lungs and on the Respiratory Functions with a view of establishing a precise and easy method of detecting Disease by the Spirometer." Transactions of the Royal Medico-Chirurgical Society of London. Vol. XXIX.

The standard of bodily cleanliness seemed to us to be quite satisfactory. As one indication of the standard of cleanliness we may state that very few of the bodies of these casuals had any flea bites.

### *I. Marital Relationships.*

Table X summarises information we received concerning the marital relationships of the casuals. The most striking feature is that no less than 80 per cent. were recorded as unmarried men. There can be no doubt that the information given by some of the casuals relating to their marital condition was false; some of the married men had good reasons for denying that they were married. But even if a liberal allowance be made for such cases we can safely conclude that the large majority of these men were unmarried.

This is a fact to which we are inclined to attach much importance, especially when seeking for a reason why these men had resorted to a life of vagrancy. We asked many of them how they came to "take the road," and in most cases we received the same reply. Even when domiciled in some town or village they had had few or no family or social ties. When they became unemployed there was nothing to keep them in that particular place and they decided to chance their luck in finding work in some other part of the country. Few of them when they set out for the first time had the slightest intention of becoming habitual vagrants. After a vain search for work in various parts of the country they had realised that once a man leaves his home town or district his chances of securing employment are considerably less: but by this time they had become accustomed to the itinerant life, and had by degrees drifted into a life of aimless vagrancy. Had some agency been able to render these men the assistance they needed during their earlier days on the road when they were really seeking work, the subsequent history of many of them may have been different.

In some cases the relationship between the unmarried state and vagrancy can be said to be the reverse of this; and especially in that of the "public works" type of man. Several of these men informed us that they had been born on the road, had lived most of their lives on it, and wished to end their lives on it. The ordinary home life made no appeal to them; and their bachelor state was the result of the vagrant mode of life and not a predisposing condition.

The wives of fifteen of the men were also seen in these casual wards. We were especially interested in the mental conditions of these married pairs. Seven of the wives and three of the husbands were feeble-minded; and in three instances both husband and wife were feeble-minded.

It is sometimes stated that when parents resort to vagrancy the poor law authorities have to bear considerable additional burdens in caring for the children. Our information relating to this aspect also of the problem is incomplete. According to the information we received the total number of children, that is of persons under 16 years of age, belonging to this group of casuals, was 35. There was one child, and that only a few weeks old, in the casual wards when we visited them. Eight of the children had been left in the care of the parents or relatives, and ten were being cared for by the poor law authorities or charitable organisations. No reliable information could be obtained concerning the maintenance of the other sixteen children. If these figures are approximately correct, the burden borne by the public authorities in caring for children who are neglected owing to the vagrancy of the parents is not a formidable one.

### *J. Army and Navy Service.*

As many as 89 of the casuals had served in the Regular Army, but only 7 had been in the Navy. Obviously large numbers of the other casuals had been in the Army or Navy during the Great War, but they are not included in these

figures. With the exception of two who had small pensions for war disabilities, none of the casuals was in receipt of regular pensions for service in the Army or Navy. The reason given for this by most of the casuals was that they had not served long enough to qualify for a pension. Others stated they had served the necessary number of years but could not claim a pension because the service had not been continuous. A study of this sub-group of casuals also corroborates the view that one of the most important factors predisposing to vagrancy is the absence of family or social ties.

#### *K. General Conclusion.*

We have now discussed the chief features of the data relating to the casuals we examined during this inquiry. The total number investigated was small; the facilities for securing full and accurate information were restricted owing to the short time at our disposal; and the medical examination of many of the casuals was only of a general nature. Bearing in mind these limitations of the inquiry, we cannot make sweeping generalisations. There is, however, one conclusion which can be safely made from our statistical data. There is to be found in this group of casuals a high degree of concentration of mental abnormalities and physical defects. The incidence of these conditions is definitely higher than would be found in a representative group of the general community. For instance the Mental Deficiency Committee estimate the incidence of mental defect in England and Wales to be approximately 8 per thousand population, whereas the figures of the present inquiry which were obtained by applying the same standards as those adopted by the Mental Deficiency Committee indicate an incidence of approximately 15 per cent. in this group of casuals. Moreover it is recognised that the incidence of mental deficiency is a reliable index of the magnitude of the larger group comprising persons of subnormal, though not actually defective, intelligence; and the general impression we received in the course of this investigation certainly confirms the opinion that the majority of casuals belong to the subnormal group of the community.

Whilst recognising the subnormal character of the casuals we are of the opinion that it is not so low as that of some other small sections of the general community. Whether judged by intellectual, moral, economical, or social standards, these casuals were better than large numbers of the men and women we have seen from time to time in the common lodging houses, especially in those of some provincial towns where the supervision exercised by the responsible authority is lax. A good proportion of the men and women who frequent these lodging houses are vagrants and therefore the social problem presented by these is closely akin to the casual problem. The relationship of these two groups of vagrants deserves careful consideration; and any innovation in the administration of casual wards should be viewed from the standpoint of the effect it may have in increasing or decreasing the number of vagrants in these lodging houses, where, owing to less adequate public control, they prove a greater menace to the community. In the best interests of the nation and of the vagrants themselves closer co-operation seems necessary in the administration of casual wards and of common lodging houses.

APPENDIX III.—Continued.

*Tables and Specimen Forms.*

TABLE I.

*Number of Councils.*

	Windsor	Baker	Glasgow	Colchester	Portsmouth	Brighton	Warrington	Sheffield	Cardbridge	Southwick	Edinburgh	St. Albans	Leamington	Reading	Chesham	TOTALS
Males	25	26	19	18	15	25	24	22	22	24	22	20	28	25	28	342
Females	4	1	3	2	1	—	2	—	—	22	2	5	4	1	4	50
TOTALS	29	27	22	20	16	25	26	22	22	46	24	25	32	26	32	392

APPENDIX III.—*Continued.*

TABLE II.

*Abnormal Mental Conditions.**A.*

—	Males.	Females.	TOTALS.	Percentage of total number of Casuals.
Feeble-minded ...	82	11	93	15.7
Insane ... ..	25	7	32	5.4
Psychoneurotic ...	30	4	34	5.7
TOTALS ... ..	137	22	159	26.8

*B.\**

—	Males.	Females.	TOTALS.
Feeble-minded and Insane ... ..	5	—	5
Feeble-minded and Psychoneurotic	2	1	3
Feeble-minded and Epileptic ...	2	—	2
TOTALS ... ..	10		10

\* The numbers in this Table are included in those of the feeble-minded group in Table A.

TABLE III.

*Age Groups.*

Ages.	Males.	Females.	TOTALS.	Percentage.
16-19	8	—	8	1.3
20-29	74	—	74	12.5
30-39	111	5	116	19.6
40-49	113	16	129	21.8
50-59	132	17	149	25.2
60-64	53	6	59	10.0
65+	51	6	57	9.6
TOTALS	542	50	592	100.0



APPENDIX III.—Continued.  
TABLE IV.  
*Age Groups of Mentally Abnormal Canada.*

Age.	Permanently.		Intermittent.		Psychomotor.		Totals.	Percentage.
	Male.	Female.	Male.	Female.	Male.	Female.	Male and Female.	
10-19	4	—	—	—	1	—	5	9.2
20-29	21	—	1	—	2	—	24	15.1
30-39	23	3	2	1	8	—	34	19.5
40-49	15	4	3	—	14	1	33	22.6
50-59	14	2	1	2	7	3	26	13.2
60-64	4	2	6	1	1	—	14	6.8
65+	4	—	13	3	—	—	20	12.6
TOTALS	82	11	25	7	30	4	150	100.0

## APPENDIX III.—Continued

TABLE V

*Employment.*

—	Skilled.	Unskilled		Clerical	Contracted,	TOTAL.
		Public Workers.	Other Labourers.			
Males	84	106	382	6	14	548
Females	5	41	—	1	—	50
TOTALS	89	479	—	7	14	590
Percentage	13.5	60.9	—	1.2	2.4	100.0

## APPENDIX III.—Continued.

TABLE VI.

*Types of Casuals.*

—	Habituals.		TOTALS.	Non-Habituals.	TOTALS.
	Chronic.	Nomads.			
Males ... ..	302	138	440	102	542
Females ... ..	22	23	45	5	50
TOTALS ... ..	324	161	485	107	592

## APPENDIX III—Continued

TABLE VII

*Matraverses*

	English.	Scottish	Irish	Welsh	Colonials and Foreigners.	TOTALS.
Males	418	22	69	27	9	545
Females	48	1	4	—	—	53
TOTALS	466	23	73	27	9	592

APPENDIX III.—*Continued.*

TABLE VIII.

*Classification of Physical Defects.*

DEFECTS.				NUMBER OF CASES.			
1.	Diseases of the Circulatory System	...	...	...	...	...	43
2.	Diseases of the Respiratory System	...	...	...	...	...	27
3.	Genito-Urinary System and Annexa	...	...	...	...	...	28
4.	Diseases of the Digestive System	...	...	...	...	...	10
5.	Eye Diseases and Defects	...	...	...	...	...	86
6.	Ear Diseases and Defects	...	...	...	...	...	24
7.	Chronic Alcoholism	...	...	...	...	...	75
8.	Malnutrition	...	...	...	...	...	28
9.	Varicose Veins, Sores on Legs, etc.	...	...	...	...	...	31
10.	Paralysis	...	...	...	...	...	10
11.	Deformities	...	...	...	...	...	74
12.	Skin Diseases	...	...	...	...	...	3

TABLE IX.

*Heights and Weights.*

Heights.		Number of Cases.	Mean Weight in lbs.	Hutchinson's Norms in lbs.
ft in.	ft. in.			
4 9 to	5 0	10	113	92
5 0 ..	5 1	14	119	116
5 1 ..	5 2	14	128	124
5 2 ..	5 3	39	125	128
5 3 ..	5 4	54	131	138
5 4 ..	5 5	48	136	139
5 5 ..	5 6	50	140	145
5 6 ..	5 7	55	144	144
5 7 ..	5 8	28	145	153
5 8 ..	5 9	23	147	158
5 9 ..	5 10	13	163	166
5 10 ..	5 11	8	157	171
5 11 ..	6 0	2	186	177

## APPENDIX III—Continued.

TABLE X.  
Marital Status.

	UNMARRIED.	MARRIED.			Totals.
		Widowed.	Living Apart.	Traveling Together.	
Males	660	40	28	15	643
Females	16	12	7		50
Totals	676	52	35	15	802

## APPENDIX III.—Continued.

FORM A.

Case No. ....

## MINISTRY OF HEALTH INVESTIGATION OF VAGRANCY.

*Preliminary Information.**Casual Ward* : .....*Name of Casual*.....*Date of Birth* .....*Last Permanent Abode* : ..... *Whether a known habitual*.....*Previous History* :

- (a) Employment.
- (b) Wages.
- (c) Insured for Unemployment.  
Why benefit ceased.
- (d) Service in Navy or Army.
- (e) Previous Institutions or Hospitals.
- (f) Married or Single.  
Number of Children :  
Ages :
- (g) Additional Information.

FORM B.

Case No. ....

## MINISTRY OF HEALTH INVESTIGATION OF VAGRANCY.

*Medical Report.**Casual Ward*.....*Name of Casual*.....*Physical Condition.*

- (a) Height ..... Weight
- (b) General Health
- (c) Physical Defects

*Mental Condition.*

- (a) Intelligence
- (b) Educational Attainments
- (c) Temperamental Features
- (d) Social Efficiency

*Additional Information**Classification.*

Normal	Epileptic	Physically Defective
Dull	Psychoneurotic	Criminal
M.D.	Insane	Senile

## APPENDIX IV.

List of the Government Departments, and the principal associations and individuals who submitted evidence, documentary or oral or both, to the Committee :—

The Ministry of Health :

- Mr. H. W. S. Francis, O.B.E., Principal Assistant Secretary.
- Mr. R. H. A. G. Duff, General Inspector for Dorset, Somerset, Devon and Cornwall.
- Mr. C. F. Roundell, C.B.E., General Inspector for the Metropolitan District, including Middlesex, Hertford, &c.
- Mr. H. K. Nisbet, O.B.E., General Inspector for Gloucester, Warwick, Wilts. and Worcestershire.
- Mr. A. G. Hayward, M.C., General Inspector for the East and West Ridings of Yorkshire.

The Ministry of Labour :

- Mr. G. T. Reid, Assistant Secretary.
- Mr. J. Ray, Deputy Divisional Controller for South-East England.

The Board of Control :

- Sir Hubert Bond, C.B.E., M.D. } Commissioners.
- Mrs. Pinsent. }

The Home Office ;

The Department of Health for Scotland ;

The Board of Trade (Mercantile Marine Department) :

- The Registrar General of Seamen and Shipping.

The British Medical Association ;

The National Association of Vagrancy Committees :

- Mr. A. H. Bonser, J.P.
- Mr. F. W. Mee.

The Association of Masters and Matrons of Poor Law Institutions :

- Mr. G. E. Usher.
- Mr. W. G. Morgan.
- Mrs. Knight.

The Associations of Poor Law Unions :

- The Rev. W. Mahon.
- Mr. J. Sumner Dury.
- Mr. Herbert Davey.

The Metropolitan Asylums Board :

- Mr. H. P. Morris.
- Sir Allan Powell, C.B.E.

The Salvation Army :

- Commissioner David Lamb.

The Church Army :

- Captain Sturmy Cave.

The Charity Organisation Society :

- The Rev. J. C. Pringle, Secretary.

The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children ;

The National Council of Women of Great Britain ;

The National League of the Blind ;

The Discharged Prisoners' Aid Society ;



The Vagrancy Reform Society ;

Mrs. Higgs.

Col. A. M. Lloyd.

Society of Friends Vagrancy Committee :

Mr. J. D. Maynard.

The Home of St. Francis, Batcombe, Dorset ;

The Rev. Douglas Downes, Warden of the Home.

The Morning Post Embankment Home ;

The Wayfarers' Benevolent Association, Heckmondwike, Yorks ;

The Glasgow Night Asylum for the Houseless ;

The Howard League for Penal Reform ;

Miss Rackstraw.

Mr. Frank Gray, of Oxford ;

Mr. F. W. Allen, Master of the Nuncaton Poor Law Institution ;

Mr. G. Morley, Chief Constable of Durham ;

Col. Chapman, Chief Constable of Kent ;

Mrs. Cecil Chesterton ;

Major L. H. Morris, Governor of H. M. Prison, Exeter ;

Mr. G. D. H. Cole ;

Mr. T. P. Holmes Watkins, M.B.E., Secretary to the Brecknock, Glamorgan and Monmouthshire Joint Vagrancy Committee ;

Mr. Edward J. Waugh, Secretary to the East Sussex Joint Vagrancy Committee ;

Mr. J. Edward Francis ;

Miss C. W. Allen ;

Two artisans with experience of Casual Wards ; and others.

## APPENDIX V.

## ENGLAND AND WALES.

Chart showing, for certain years, the number of casuals relieved on the night of Friday in each week.

